14th Anniversary ALL STAR ISSUE

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Fantasy AND Science Fiction

OCTOBER 40¢

ASIMOV

BESTER

DAVIDSON

DE CAMP

HENDERSON

MACLEISH

MATHESON

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

OCTOBER *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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Cover by Chesley Bonestell (*see page 23 for explanation*)

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In this issue . . .

. . . traditionally the month of our All-Star Issue . . . are the following items, as promised: *Item:* story by **RICHARD MATHESON**, about a heel and a girl with a strange talent; *Item:* a long poem by Mr. **ARCHIBALD MACLEISH,** whose former appointment as Librarian of Congress constitutes one of the few acts of official patronage of the arts of which our Republic can recently boast; *Item:* a story of how the pilgrimage or diaspora of The People began, by **ZENNA HENDERSON;** *Item:* an **AVRAM DAVIDSON** tale linking up movies, TV, and some of those concerned with both; *Item:* a cautionary and illuminating article on an aspect of Science Fiction and Science Fact too often overlooked, by **L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP;** *Item:* a far-out account of life and death, by **P. M. HUBBARD;** *Item:* one wild, *wild* story by **ALFRED BESTER,** which we had to break a rule to publish—and are not sorry, either; and, finally, as the last *Item:* a guest editorial by **FRED** *(What Mad Universe)* **BROWN.** Ahem . . . *not* in this issue, though promised, are stories by **MACK REYNOLDS** and **TERRY CARR**—dat ol' debbil, "reasons of space," precluded. Real Soon Now, though . . . meanwhile, partisans of these authors, please don't try to kill the Editor. He left for Deneb III on the morning rocket.

Coming next month . . .

. . . a novelet by **ROGER ZELAZNY,** with the intriguing (and deliberately-chosen) title of *A Rose For Ecclesiastes.* Accompanying this beautiful and unusual story is an unusual and beautiful cover, painted especially for it by **HANNES BOK,** one of the truly great Science Fantasy artists of all time. Also present will be a short novel by **SIR L. E. JONES,** about a discovery made on a Grecian isle . . . and what befell thereby. If you miss this issue you will be sorry.

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"The second sight," as it is often called, or clairvoyance, has been so often and so well attested that it has been recognized as a legitimate and non-diabolical phenomenon by that stern, august, and level-headed body the Established Kirk of Scotland. Not particularly limited to that or to any other extra-sensory ability is the ancient, ancient exhortation that great gifts durst not be used for mean purposes. Richard Matheson, in a modern key, spins a tale of life and death, love and hate and greed.

GIRL OF MY DREAMS

by Richard Matheson

HE WOKE UP, GRINNING, IN THE darkness. Carrie was having a nightmare. He lay on his side and listened to her breathless moaning. Must be a good one, he thought. He reached out and touched her back. The nightgown was wet with her perspiration. *Great*, he thought. He pulled his hand away as she squirmed against it, starting to make faint noises in her throat; it sounded as if she were trying to say "No."

No, hell, Greg thought. Dream, you ugly bitch; what else are you good for? He yawned and pulled his left arm from beneath the covers. Three-sixteen. He wound the watch stem sluggishly. Going to get me one of those electric watches one of these days, he thought. Maybe this dream would do it. Too bad Carrie had no control over them. If she did, he could really make it big.

He rolled onto his back. The nightmare was ending now; or coming to its peak, he was never sure which. What difference did it make anyway? He wasn't interested in the machinery, just the product. He grinned again, reaching over to the bedside table for his cigarettes. Lighting one, he blew up smoke. Now he'd have to comfort her, he thought with a frown. That was the part he could live without. Dumb little creep. Why couldn't she be blonde and beautiful? He expelled a burst of smoke. Well, you couldn't ask for everything. If she were good-looking, she probably wouldn't have these dreams. There were plenty of other women to provide the rest of it.

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Carrie jerked violently and sat up with a cry, pulling the covers from his legs. Greg looked at her outline in the darkness. She was shivering. "Oh, no," she whispered. He watched her head begin to shake. "No. No." She started to cry, her body hitching with sobs. Oh, Christ, he thought, this'll take hours. Irritably, he pressed his cigarette into the ashtray and sat up.

"Baby?" he said.

She twisted around with a gasp and stared at him. "Come 'ere," he told her. He opened his arms and she flung herself against him. He could feel her narrow fingers gouging at his back, the soggy weight of her breasts against his chest. Oh, boy, he thought. He kissed her neck, grimacing at the smell of her sweat-damp skin. Oh, boy, what I go through. He caressed her back. "Take it easy, baby," he said, "I'm here." He let her cling to him, sobbing weakly. "Bad dream?" he asked. He tried to sound concerned.

"Oh, Greg." She could barely speak. "It was horrible, oh, God, how horrible."

He grinned. It *was* a good one.

"Which way?" he asked.

Carrie perched stiffly on the edge of the seat, looking through the windshield with troubled eyes. Any second now, she'd pretend she didn't know; she always did. Greg's fingers tightened slowly on the wheel. One of these days, by God, he'd smack her right across her ugly face and walk out, free. Damn freak. He felt the skin begin to tighten across his cheeks. "Well?" he asked.

"I don't—"

"Which way, Carrie?" God, he'd like to twist back one of her scrawny arms and break the damn thing; squeeze that skinny neck until her breath stopped.

Carrie swallowed dryly. "Left," she murmured.

Bingo! Greg almost laughed aloud, slapping down the turn indicator. *Left*—right into the Eastridge area, the money area. You dreamed it right this time, you dog, he thought; this is It. All he had to do now was play it smart and he'd be free of her for good. He'd sweated it out and now it was payday!

The tires made a crisp sound on the pavement as he turned the car onto the quiet, tree-lined street. "How far?" he asked. She didn't answer and he looked at her threateningly. Her eyes were shut.

"How far? I said."

Carrie clutched her hands together. "Greg, please—" she started. Tears were squeezing out beneath her lids.

"Damn it!"

Carrie whimpered and said something. "What?" he snapped. She drew in wavering breath.

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"The middle of the next block," she said.

"Which side?"

"The right."

Greg smiled. He leaned back against the seat and relaxed. That was more like it. Dumb bitch tried the same old I-forget routine every time. When would she learn that he had her down cold? He almost chuckled. She never would, he thought; because, after this one, he'd be gone and she could dream for nothing.

"Tell me when we reach it," he said.

"Yes," she answered. She had turned her face to the window and was leaning her forehead against the cold glass. Don't cool it too much, he thought, amused; keep it hot for Daddy. He pressed away the rising smile as she turned to look at him. Was she picking up on him? Or was it just the usual? It was always the same. Just before they reached wherever they were going, she'd look at him intently as if to convince herself that it was worth the pain. He felt like laughing in her face. Obviously, it was worth it. How else could a beast like her land someone with his class? Except for him, her bed would be the emptiest, her nights the longest.

"Almost there?" he asked.

Carrie looked to the front again. "The white one," she said.

"With the half-circle drive?"

She nodded tightly. "Yes."

Greg clenched his teeth, a spasm of avidity sweeping through him. Fifty thousand if it was worth a nickel, he thought. Oh, you bitch, you crazy bitch, you really nailed it for me this time! He turned the wheel and pulled in at the curb. Cutting the engine, he glanced across the street. The convertible would come from that direction, he thought. He wondered who'd be driving it. Not that it mattered.

"Greg?"

He turned and eyed her coldly. "What?"

She bit her lip, then started to speak.

"*No,*" he said, cutting her off. He pulled out the ignition key and shoved open the door. "Let's go," he said. He slid out, shut the door and walked around the car. Carrie was still inside. "Let's *go,* baby," he said, the hint of venom in his voice.

"Greg, please—"

He shuddered at the cost of repressing an intense desire to scream curses at her, jerk open the door and drag her out by her hair. His rigid fingers clamped on the handle and he opened the door, waited. Christ, but she was ugly—the features, the skin, the body. She'd never looked so repugnant to him. "I *said let's go,*" he told her. He couldn't disguise the tremble of fury in his voice.

Carrie got out and he shut the

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door. It was getting colder. Greg drew up the collar of his topcoat, shivering as they started up the drive toward the front door of the house. He could use a heavier coat, he thought; with a nice, thick lining. A real sharp one, maybe black. He'd get one one of these days—and maybe real soon too. He glanced at Carrie, wondering if she had any notion of his plans. He doubted it even though she looked more worried than ever. What the hell was with her? She'd never been this bad before. Was it because it was a kid? He shrugged. What difference did it make? She'd perform.

"Cheer up," he said, "It's a school day. You won't have to see him." She didn't answer.

They went up two steps onto the brick porch and stopped before the door. Greg pushed the button and, deep inside the house, melodic chimes sounded. While they waited, he reached inside his topcoat pocket and touched the small, leather notebook. Funny how he always felt like some kind of weird salesman when they were operating. A salesman with a damned closed market, he thought, amused. No one else could offer what he had to sell, that was for sure.

He glanced at Carrie. "Cheer *up*," he told her, "We're helping them, aren't we?"

Carrie shivered. "It won't be too much, will it, Greg?"

"I'll decide on—"

He broke off as the door was opened. For a moment, he felt angry disappointment that the bell had not been answered by a maid. Then he thought: Oh, what the hell, the money's still here—and he smiled at the woman who stood before them. "Good afternoon," he said.

The woman looked at him with that half polite, half suspicious smile most women gave him at first. "Yes?" she asked.

"It's about Paul," he said.

The smile disappeared, the woman's face grew blank. "What?" she asked.

"That's your son's name, isn't it?"

The woman glanced at Carrie. Already, she was disconcerted, Greg could see.

"He's in danger of his life," he told her, "Are you interested in hearing more about it?"

"What's happened to him?"

Greg smiled affably. "Nothing yet," he answered. The woman caught her breath as if, abruptly, she were being strangled.

"You've taken him," she murmured.

Greg's smile broadened. "Nothing like that," he said.

"Where is he then?" the woman asked.

Greg looked at his wristwatch, feigning surprise. "Isn't he at school?" he asked.

Uneasily confused, the woman

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stared at him for several moments before she twisted away, pushing at the door. Greg caught hold of it before it shut. "Inside," he ordered.

"Can't we wait out—?"

Carrie broke off with a gasp as he clamped his fingers on her arm and pulled her into the hall. While he shut the door, Greg listened to the rapid whir and click of a telephone being dialed in the kitchen. He smiled and took hold of Carrie's arm again, guiding her into the livingroom. "Sit," he told her.

Carrie settled gingerly on the edge of a chair while he appraised the room. Money was in evidence wherever he looked; in the carpeting and drapes, the period furniture, the accessories. Greg pulled in a tight, exultant breath and tried to keep from grinning like an eager kid; this was It all right. Dropping onto the sofa, he stretched luxuriously, leaned back and crossed his legs, glancing at the name on a magazine lying on the end table beside him. In the kitchen, he could hear the woman saying, "He's in Room Fourteen; Mrs. Jennings' class."

A sudden clicking sound made Carrie gasp. Greg turned his head and saw, through the back drapes, a collie scratching at the sliding glass door; beyond, he noted, with renewed pleasure, the glint of swimming pool water. Greg watched the dog. It must be the one that would—

"*Thank* you," said the woman gratefully. Greg turned back and looked in that direction. The woman hung up the telephone receiver and her footsteps tapped across the kitchen floor, becoming soundless as she stepped onto the hallway carpeting. She started cautiously toward the front door.

"We're in here, Mrs. Wheeler," said Greg.

The woman caught her breath and whirled in shock. "What *is* this?" she demanded.

"Is he all right?" Greg asked. "*What do you want?*"

Greg drew the notebook from his pocket and held it out. "Would you like to look at this?" he asked.

The woman didn't answer but peered at Greg through narrowing eyes. "That's right," he said, "We're selling something."

The woman's face grew hard.

"*Your son's life,*" Greg completed.

The woman gaped at him, momentary resentment invaded by fear again. Jesus, you look stupid, Greg felt like telling her. He forced a smile. "Are you interested?" he asked.

"Get out of here before I call the police." The woman's voice was husky, tremulous.

"You're not interested in your son's life then."

The woman shivered with

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fear-ridden anger. "Did you hear me?" she said.

Greg exhaled through clenching teeth.

"Mrs. Wheeler," he said, "Unless you listen to us—*carefully*—your son will soon be dead." From the corners of his eyes, he noticed Carrie wincing and felt like smashing in her face. That's right he thought with savage fury. Show her how scared you are, you stupid bitch!

Mrs. Wheeler's lips stirred falteringly as she stared at Greg. "What are you talking about?" she finally asked.

"Your son's life, Mrs. Wheeler."

"Why should you want to hurt my boy?" the woman asked, a sudden quaver in her voice. Greg felt himself relax. She was almost in the bag.

"Did I say that we were going to hurt him?" he asked, smiling at her quizzically, "I don't remember saying that, Mrs. Wheeler."

"Then—?"

"Sometime before the middle of the month," Greg interrupted, "Paul will be run over by a car and killed."

"What?"

Greg did not repeat.

"What car?" asked the woman. She looked at Greg in panic. "What car?" she demanded.

"We don't know exactly."

"Where?" the woman asked. "When?"

"That information," Greg replied, "is what we're selling."

The woman turned to Carrie, looking at her frightenedly. Carrie lowered her gaze, teeth digging at her lower lip. The woman looked back at Greg as he continued.

"Let me explain," he said, "My wife is what's known as a 'sensitive'. You may not be familiar with the term. It means she has visions and dreams. Very often, they have to do with real people. Like the dream she had last night —about your son."

The woman shrank from his words and, as Greg expected, an element of shrewdness modified her expression; there was now, in addition to fear, suspicion.

"I know what you're thinking," he informed her. "Don't waste your time. Look at this notebook and you'll see—"

"Get out of here," the woman said.

Greg's smile grew strained. "That again?" he asked. "You mean you really don't care about your son's life?"

The woman managed a smile of contempt. "Shall I call the police now?" she asked. "The *bunco* squad?"

"If you really want to," answered Greg, "but I suggest you listen to me first." He opened the notebook and began to read. *"January twenty-second: Man named Jim to fall from roof while ad-*

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justing television aerial. Ramsay Street. Two-story house, green with white trim. Here's the news item."

Greg glanced at Carrie and nodded once, ignoring her pleading look as he stood and walked across the room. The woman cringed back apprehensively but didn't move. Greg held up the notebook page. "As you can see," he said, "The man didn't believe what we told him and did fall off his roof on January twenty-second; it's harder to convince them when you can't give any details so as not to give it all away." He clucked as if disturbed. "He should have paid us though," he said. "It would have been a lot less expensive than a broken back."

"Who do you think you're—?"

"Here's another," Greg said, turning a page. "This should interest you. *February twelfth, afternoon: Boy, 13, name unknown, to fall into abandoned well shaft, fracture pelvis. Lives on Darien Circle,* etcetera, etcetera, you can see the details here," he finished, pointing at the page. "Here's the newspaper clipping. As you can see, his parents were just in time. They'd refused to pay at first, threatened to call the police like you did." He smiled at the woman. "Threw us out of the house as a matter of fact," he said. "On the afternoon of the twelfth though, when I made a last-minute phone check, they were out of their minds with worry. Their son had disappeared and they had no idea where he was—I hadn't mentioned the well shaft, of course."

He paused for a moment of dramatic emphasis, enjoying the moment fully. "I went over to their house," he said, "they made their payment and I told them where their son was." He pointed at the clipping. "He was found, as you can see—down in an abandoned well shaft. With a broken pelvis."

"Do you really—?"

"—expect you to believe all this?" Greg completed her thought. "Not completely; no one ever does at first. Let me tell you what you're thinking right now. You're thinking that we cut out these newspaper items and made up this story to fit them. You're entitled to believe that if you want to—" his face hardened, "—but, if you do, you'll have a dead son by the middle of the month, you can count on that."

He smiled cheerfully. "I don't believe you'd enjoy hearing how it's going to happen," he said.

The smile began to fade. "And it *is* going to happen, Mrs. Wheeler, whether you believe it or not."

The woman, still too dazed by fright to be completely sure of her suspicion, watched Greg as he turned to Carrie. "Well?" he said.

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"I don't—"

Let's have it," he demanded.

Carrie bit her lower lip and tried to restrain the sob.

"What are you going to do?" the woman asked.

Greg turned to her with a smile. "Make our point," he said. He looked at Carrie again. *"Well?"*

She answered, eyes closed, voice pained and feeble. "There's a throw rug by the nursery door," she said. "You'll slip on it while you're carrying the baby."

Greg glanced at her in pleased surprise; he hadn't known there was a baby. Quickly, he looked at the woman as Carrie continued in a troubled voice, "There's a black widow spider underneath the playpen on the patio, it will bite the baby, there's a—"

"Care to check these items, Mrs. Wheeler?" Greg broke in. Suddenly, he hated her for her slowness, for her failure to accept. "Or shall we just walk out of here," he said, sharply, *"and let that blue convertible drag Paul's head along the street until his brains spill out?"*

The woman looked at him in horror. Greg felt a momentary dread that he had told her too much, then relaxed as he realized that he hadn't. "I suggest you check," he told her, pleasantly. The woman backed away from him a little bit, then turned and hurried toward the patio door. "Oh, incidentally," Greg said, remembering. She turned. "That dog out there will try to save your son but it won't succeed; the car will kill it too."

The woman stared at him, as if uncomprehending, then turned away and, sliding open the patio door, went outside. Greg saw the collie frisking around her as she moved across the patio. Leisurely, he returned to the sofa and sat down.

"Greg—?"

He frowned grimacingly, jerking up his hand to silence her. Out on the patio, there was a scraping noise as the woman overturned the playpen. He listened intently. There was a sudden gasp, then the stamping of the woman's shoe on concrete, an excited barking by the dog. Greg smiled and leaned back with a sigh. Bingo.

When the woman came back in, he smiled at her, noticing how heavily she breathed.

"That could happen any place," she said, defensively.

"Could it?" Greg's smile remained intact. "And the throw rug?"

"Maybe you looked around while I was in the kitchen."

"We didn't."

"Maybe you guessed."

"And maybe we didn't," he told her, chilling his smile. "Maybe everything we've said is true. You want to gamble on it?"

The woman had no reply. Greg

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looked at Carrie. "Anything else?" he asked. Carrie shivered fitfully. "An electric outlet by the baby's crib," she said. "She has a bobby pin beside her, she's been trying to put it in the plug and—"

"Mrs. Wheeler?" Greg looked inquisitively at the woman. He snickered as she turned and hurried from the room. When she was gone, he smiled and winked at Carrie. "You're really on today, baby," he said. She returned his look with glistening eyes. "Greg, please don't make it too much," she murmured.

Greg turned away from her, the smile withdrawn. Relax, he told himself; relax. After today, you'll be free of her. Casually, he slipped the notebook back into his topcoat pocket.

The woman returned in several minutes, her expression now devoid of anything but dread. Between two fingers of her right hand she was carrying a bobby pin. *"How did you know?"* she asked. Her voice was hollow with dismay.

"I believe I explained that, Mrs. Wheeler," Greg replied. "My wife has a gift. She knows exactly where and when that accident will occur. Do you care to buy that information?"

The woman's hands twitched at her sides. "What do you want?" she asked.

"Ten thousand dollars in cash," Greg answered. His fingers flexed reactively as Carrie gasped but he didn't look at her. He fixed his gaze on the woman's stricken face. "Ten thousand . . ." she repeated dumbly.

"That's correct. Is it a deal?"

"But we don't—"

"Take it or leave it, Mrs. Wheeler. You're not in a bargaining position. Don't think for a second that there's anything you can do to prevent the accident. Unless you know the exact time and place, it's going to happen." He stood abruptly, causing her to start. "Well?" he snapped, "what's it going to be? Ten thousand dollars or your son's life?"

The woman couldn't answer. Greg's eyes flicked to where Carrie sat in mute despair. "Let's go," he said. He started for the hall.

"Wait."

Greg turned and looked at the woman. "Yes?"

"How—do I know—?" she faltered.

"You don't," he broke in, "you don't know a thing. *We* do."

He waited another few moments for her decision, then walked into the kitchen and, removing his memo pad from an inside pocket, slipped the pencil free and jotted down the telephone number. He heard the woman murmuring pleadingly to Carrie and, shoving the pad and pencil into his topcoat pocket, left the kitchen. "Let's go," he said to Carrie who was standing now. He

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glanced disinterestedly at the woman. "I'll phone this afternoon," he said. "You can tell me then what you and your husband have decided to do." His mouth went hard. *"It'll be the only call you'll get,"* he said.

He turned and walked to the front door, opened it. "Come on, come on," he ordered irritably. Carrie slipped by him, brushing at the tears on her cheeks. Greg followed and began to close the door, then stopped as if remembering something.

"Incidentally," he said. He smiled at the woman. "I wouldn't call the police if I were you. There's nothing they could charge us with even if they found us. And, of course, we couldn't tell you then—and your son would have to die." He closed the door and started for the car, a picture of the woman printed in his mind: standing, dazed and trembling, in her livingroom, looking at him with haunted eyes. Greg grunted in amusement.

She was hooked.

Greg drained his glass and fell back heavily on the sofa arm, making a face. It was the last cheap whiskey he'd ever drink; from now on, it was exclusively the best. He turned his head to look at Carrie. She was standing by the window of their hotel livingroom, staring at the city. What the hell was she brooding about now? Likely, she was wondering where that blue convertible was. Momentarily, Greg wondered himself. Was it parked?—moving? He grinned drunkenly. It gave him a feeling of power to know something about that car that even its owner didn't know: namely, that, in eight days, at two-sixteen on a Thursday afternoon, it would run down a little boy and kill him.

He focused his eyes and glared at Carrie. "All right, say it," he demanded. "Get it out."

She turned and looked at him imploringly. "Does it have to be so much?" she asked.

He turned his face away from her and closed his eyes.

"Greg, does it—?"

"Yes!" He drew in shaking breath. God, would he be glad to get away from her!

"What if they can't pay?"

"Tough."

The sound of her repressed sob set his teeth on edge. "Go in and lie down," he told her.

"Greg, he hasn't got a chance!"

He twisted around, face whitening. "Did he have a better chance before we came?" he snarled. "Use your head for once, God damn it! If it wasn't for us, he'd be as good as dead already!"

"Yes, but—"

"I said go in and lie down!"

"You haven't seen the way it's going to happen, Greg!"

He shuddered violently, fight-

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ing back the urge to grab the whiskey bottle, leap at her and smash her head in. *"Get out of here,"* he muttered.

She stumbled across the room, pressing the back of a hand against her lips. The bedroom door thumped shut and he heard her fall across the bed, sobbing. Damn, wet-eye bitch! He gritted his teeth until his jaws hurt, then poured himself another inch of whiskey, grimacing as it burned its way into his stomach. They'll come through, he told himself. Obviously, they had the money and, obviously, the woman had believed him. He nodded to himself. They'll come through, all right. Ten thousand; his passport to another life. Expensive clothes. A class hotel. Good-looking women; maybe one of them for keeps. He kept nodding. One of these days, he thought.

He was reaching for his glass when he heard the muffled sound of Carrie talking in the bedroom. For several moments, his outstretched hand hovered between the sofa and the table. Then, in an instant, he was on his feet, lunging for the bedroom door. He flung it open. Carrie jerked around, the phone receiver in her hand, her face a mask of dread. "Thursday, the fourteenth!" she blurted into the mouthpiece. "Two-sixteen in the afternoon!" She screamed as Greg wrenched the receiver from her hand and slammed his palm on the cradle, breaking the connection.

He stood quivering before her, staring at her face with widened, maniac eyes. Slowly, Carrie raised her hand to avert the blow. "Greg, please don't—" she began.

Fury deafened him. He couldn't hear the heavy, thudding sound the earpiece made against her cheek as he slammed it across her face with all his might. She fell back with a strangled cry. "You bitch," he gasped. "You bitch, you bitch, you bitch!" He emphasized each repetition of the word with another savage blow across her face. He couldn't see her clearly either; she kept wavering behind a film of blinding rage. Everything was finished! She'd blown the deal! The Big One was gone! *God damn it, I'll kill you*! He wasn't certain if the words exploded in his mind or if he were shouting them into her face.

Abruptly, he became aware of the telephone receiver clutched in his aching hand; of Carrie lying, open-mouthed and staring on the bed, her features mashed and bloody. He lost his grip and heard, as if it were a hundred miles below, the receiver thumping on the floor. He stared at Carrie, sick with horror. Was she dead? He pressed his ear against her chest and listened. At first, he could hear only the pulse of his own heart throbbing in his ears.

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Then, as he concentrated, his expression tautly rabid, he became aware of Carrie's heartbeat, faint and staggering. She wasn't dead! He jerked his head up.

She was looking at him, mouth slack, eyes dumbly stark.

"Carrie?"

No reply. Her lips moved soundlessly. She kept on staring at him. "What?" he asked. He recognized the look and shuddered. *"What?"*

"Street," she whispered.

Greg bent over, staring at her mangled features. "Street," she whispered, ". . . night." She sucked in wheezing, blood-choked breath. "Greg." She tried to sit up but couldn't. Her expression was becoming one of terrified concern. She whispered, "Man . . . razor . . . you—oh, *no!*"

Greg felt himself enveloped in ice. He clutched at her arm. "Where?" he mumbled. She didn't answer and his fingers dug convulsively into her flesh. "Where?" he demanded. "When?" He began to shiver uncontrollably. "Carrie, *when?!*"

It was the arm of a dead woman that he clutched. With a gagging sound, he jerked his hand away. He gaped at her, unable to speak or think. Then, as he backed away, his eyes were drawn to the calendar on the wall and a phrase crept leadenly across his mind: *one of these days*. Quite suddenly, he began to laugh and cry. And before he fled, he stood at the window for an hour and twenty minutes, staring out, wondering who the man was, where he was right now and just what he was doing.

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EPISTLE TO BE LEFT IN THE EARTH

. . . It is colder now,
there are many stars,
we are drifting
North by the Great Bear,
the leaves are falling,
The water is stone in the scooped rocks,
to southward
Red sun grey air:
the crows are
Slow on their crooked wings,
the jays have left us:
Long since we passed the flares of Orion.
Each man believes in his heart he will die.
Many have written last thoughts and last letters.
None know if our deaths are now or forever:
None know if this wandering earth will be found.

We lie down and the snow covers our garments.
I pray you,
you (if any open this writing)
Make in your mouths the words that were our names.
I will tell you all we have learned,
I will tell you everything:
The earth is round,
there are springs under the orchards,
The loam cuts with a blunt knife,
beware of
Elms in thunder,
the lights in the sky are stars—
We think they do not see,
we think also
The trees do not know nor the leaves of the grasses hear us:

Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston for "Epistle to be Left in the Earth" from COLLECTED POEMS 1917-1952, © 1952 by Archibald MacLeish

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The birds too are ignorant.
Do not listen.
Do not stand at dark in the open windows.
We before you have heard this:
they are voices:
They are not words at all but the wind rising.
Also none among us has seen God.
(. . . We have thought often
The flaws of sun in the late and driving weather
Pointed to one tree but it was not so.)
As for the nights I warn you the nights are dangerous:
The wind changes at night and the dreams come.

It is very cold,
there are strange stars near Arcturus,
Voices are crying an unknown name in the sky

—ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

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BOOKS

THE WORM OUROBOROS, E. R. Eddison, Crown, (Xanadu Library), $1.95

This is a reprint (with Keith Henderson's fine illustrations) of the classic by an Englishman who was "a successful civil servant" and is now dead. His tale is a fantasy set upon the planet Mercury; its characters are called Witches, Demons, Goblins, Ghouls, Imps, but have nothing to do with those we customarily so term; such words of middle-Earth as "middle-Earth," "Yule," Pasque," and the names of sundry Grecian gods appear; as do Greek, English, Scottish verse, put in the mouths of the protagonists. Apart from this there are no Terrestrial points of reference. It's hinted that the story is a dream, and as such it cannot be called to order. The prose is a rich—almost over-rich—pastiche of the usage of the 15th to 17th centuries; it abounds in beautiful, quotable language. ". . . *the wash and moan of the sullen, sleepless sea.*" ". . . *above the smooth downs the wind was lulled to sleep in the vast silent spaces of the sky . . .*" "*The hues of death and silence spread themselves where late the fires of sunset glowed, and large stars opened like flowers on the illimitable fields of the night sky: Arcturus, Spica, Gemini, and the Little Dog, and Capella and her kids.*" ". . . *the heavy face of Corsus, his eyes, baggy underneath, and somewhat bloodshed, his pendulous cheeks, thick blubber underlip, and bristly grey mustachios and whiskers.*" All these from the first part of the book; after that I ceased marking the innumerably noteworthy lines. The story is mainly one of war, witchcraft, adventure, conspiracy, violence, bloodshed, intrigue. Romance, love, appear but late, and do not flourish. The heros have names like Juss, Brandoch Daha, and Goldry Bluszco and Spitfire: brother-lords of Demonland. The villains are King Gorice of Witchland and such henchmen as Corsus, Corind, Corinius, Laxus. Macchiavellian, Iago-like, perpetual turncoat, yet not altogether despicable, is Lord Gro—"one who is not false save only in policy." The tale turns upon the Witch-King's desire to conquer

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all, to destroy every rival; on the resistance he meets; and on the side-events arising from both. It should be read slowly, but it should be read. The absence of real people and of humanity (the quality, not the race) from works of Science Fiction and of Fantasy is frequent—unfortunate—not puzzling. Such experiences do not really happen, they do not happen to real people, therefore our authors have difficulty putting real people into their tales. One outstanding and successful author, Tolkien, solves or at least avoids the difficulty by making his characters other-than-human—Elves, Orcs, Hobbits, and so on. So has Eddison, who preceded Tolkien, somewhat eluded the imputation . . . but only somewhat. As his Goblins, Demons, Witches, Pixies, Imps, despite their names, are really intended for real people, his work must be judged not only by what we know of such, but by what we have read of such. OUROBOROS is a classic, but it is not and cannot be a great classic. Comparison with the Iliad and Oddyssey is, of course, out of the question—but may we not compare The Arabian Nights? There, too, is blood and war and intrigue and sorcery, but there, too, is humanity. The farmer winnows his grain, the fisherman casts his net, the loathsome gobbo begs in his filthy robes, God is worshipped, sweetmeats bought (*bought*—in OUROBOROS they are just there), people have bowels, grow rich, grow poor, give alms, make love—they do not merely kiss and declaim and posture, they *make love*—men have thighs and moles, women have breasts and navels and pudenda. There, too, as in OUROBOROS, are swords and armies and palaces, kings and princes and lords, witchcraft and magic and weird. But all the while a life goes on which is a real life, and we recognize it, and we love it.

Amongst all who have written in this genre in the English language, Eddison stands high. Set him alongside the unknown Orientals who composed *Alf Layla wa-Layla,* The Thousand and One Nights, and he does not reach even to their ankles.

Where, then, are all the rest of us?

A GUN FOR DINOSAUR, L. Sprague de Camp, Doubleday, $4.50

I found this collection of fourteen short stories by Science Fiction's Mr. Erudition to be a great disappointment, and only my sense of duty (compensating for my sense of wonder) kept me going up till 25 pages from the end. De Camp's non-fiction, his novels, I enjoy and admire. I used to enjoy his short stories as well. What has happened? Have I changed? Has he? Both of us? Time after

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time he gets hold of a great idea —and throws it away in playing for laughs of the feeblest conceivable sort. Too bad, too bad, too bad. The sole exception deals with an embittered scientist who—with good reason—hates the whole human race; it is so authentic-sounding that one could scream.

WE SEVEN, "by the Astronauts themselves," Simon & Schuster, $6.50

The title is inescapably reminiscent of Gen. Charles Augustus Lindbergh's *We*—himself and his aeroplane—in which he described his famous flight across the Atlantic ocean in 1927. I suppose the efforts of Carpenter, Cooper, Glenn, Grissom, Schirra, Shepard, and Slayton (only 3 letters of the alphabet amongst them) must and will be regarded as more important . . . the first hops to the stars, compared to what was only the first *solo* flight across one sea. There is one big difference, and one which prevents those of us in Science Fiction from regarding the accomplishments of the NASA seven as having fulfilled our long dreams and confident expectations: Lindbergh got some place. The Astronauts didn't. Unless cislunar space is a place. Let no one think I am, for Heaven's sake, putting them down. But "our" future hasn't quite arrived yet, won't until there has been a man on the moon. This minor caveat over, let me say that I recognize this account of the backgrounds of the Astronauts, their training for the first (American) leap into space, and the journeys of Shepard, Glenn, Grissom and Carpenter thereunto, to be of the utmost importance. I have still not taken it all in. I know there is more to it all than Carpenter's modest observance that man in space can learn useful data about harmful radiation and destructive storms. I concede Glenn was likely right in saying that our space men will be "as unlike Buck Rogers as the Wright Brothers were unlike Icarus." I am slightly slack-jawed at the space capsule's using hydrogen peroxide steam as a fuel; bemused at the report of thousands of yellowish green particles glowing like fire-flies up above the troposphere . . . Am I really ready for the future? Is the future really ready for me? I-be-damn-and-go-to-Hell if I know. But—ready or not—here we come.

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, **Anthony Burgess**, Norton, $3.95

This curious work is evidently a tale of young adult hooliganism in a future England. I say evidently, because I'm not quite sure. Here is a typical sentence from page 1: "They had no licence for selling liquor, but there was no

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law yet against prodding some of the new vesches which they used to put in the old moloko, so you could peer it with vellocet or synthemesc or drencrom or one or two other vesches which would give you a nice quiet horrorshow fifteen minutes admiring Bog And All His Holy Angels and Saints in your left shoe with lights bursting all over your mozg." Mr. Burgess, I am informed, has not really invented his language—it is Russian. And if I have to learn Russian I am sure I can find better things to read than A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, which I find unreadable.

TALES OF TEN WORLDS, **Arthur C. Clarke**, Harcourt, Brace, & World, $3.95

I must explain, with a blush, and the hopes that authors and readers will forgive me, that as a result of my delayed honeymoon a number of books for review got misplaced and are just now being uncovered. The fifteen-story Clarke collection is one of them. It is too good to have merited such treatment. Few writers in the field handle science with such knowledge as to be so convincing, such deftness as never to place stumbling-blocks, and with such clarity of style as to appear to have none at all. His scope is not measured in light-years alone; in this chrestomathy he touches on love, hate, politics, pets, pornography (no, Boston, he himself stays clean!), several kinds of fear, the detection of crime, adultery, art . . . and more. It's a good book.

Through the kindness of Mr. Clarke we are able to publish below parts of his address last year in New Delhi, India, on receiving the UNESCO's Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science. "The subsequent banquet in the vast guilded hall of the Palace of the Nizam of Hyderabad," he writes, "made quite a contrast to my other dining-out place, the 23rd St. Automat."

—AVRAM DAVIDSON

It is obvious that science fiction should be technically accurate, and there is no excuse for erroneous information when the true facts are available. Yet accuracy should not be too much of a fetish, for it is often the spirit rather than the letter that counts. Thus Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* and *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* are still enjoyable, not only because Verne was a first-rate story teller, but because he was imbued with the excitement of science and could communicate this to his readers. That many of his "facts" and most of his theories are now known to be incorrect is not a fatal flaw, for his books still arouse the sense of wonder.

The cultural impact of science

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fiction has never been properly recognised, and the time is long overdue for an authoritative study of its history and development. Perhaps this is a project that UNESCO could sponsor, for it is obvious that no single scholar will have the necessary qualifications for the task. In one field in particular—that of astronautics—the influence of science fiction has been enormous. The four greatest pioneers of spaceflight—Tsiolkovsky, Oberth, Goddard and von Braun all wrote science fiction to propagate their ideas (though they did not always get it published!).

Sir Charles Snow ends his famous essay *Science and Government* by stressing the vital importance of "the gift of foresight." He points out that men often have wisdom without possessing foresight. Perhaps we science-fiction writers sometimes show foresight without wisdom; but at least we undoubtedly do have foresight, and it may rub off on to the community at large.

—ARTHUR C. CLARKE

ABOUT THE COVER

This month's cover by Chesley Bonestell pictures a binary or double star found in the constellation Sagittarius. The star is known as U Sagittae. It consists of one white hot star and a larger red (hence cooler) companion with a tenuous surface.

The initial U simply indicates the order in which the variable star was discovered in a constellation. R is used as a starting point. After reaching Z, the progression is RR, RS, RT . . . RZ; then SS . . . SZ; and so on down to ZZ.

The painting appears in a new book by Chesley Bonestell and Willey Ley titled *Watchers of the Skies.*

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This, the latest of The People stories, was written to tell me, as well as many of the fans of The People, what happened to the Home. After all, that's really where the story of The People began.

Those of you who are familiar with the Bible will have discovered long ago that the names of the stories, and the quotations contained in them, follow loosely the wandering of the Children of Israel from the Flood to the crossing of the Jordan. This, then is *Deluge* which is the disaster that wiped out The People's world and landed them on Ararat.

I've been asked by some readers if The People exist. No. They're strictly fiction. I wish they were real. If all people were like The People, wouldn't it be a wonderful world? Maybe someday we will be The People. Miracles happen. The People stories are for fun. They are the Cinderella dreams, the I-must-be-adopted-because-I'm-different dreams, the If-Only dreams of all of us. I like the magic that needs no wand, no muttered incantations. After all, mankind was supposed to have dominion over all the world. Maybe this is the way things would work if we really did have that dominion.

—ZENNA HENDERSON

I was born in Tucson, Arizona, and, after years of wandering around, I am back here again. I am a school teacher and teach mostly the lower grades—the children between five and seven years old. That is the logical explanation of why most of my stories are about school or school teachers. Most of my life has been spent in Arizona, though in lots of places in the state. Before I finished the eighth grade I had gone to twelve different schools. I've taught in about as many, too. During the Second World War, I taught at one of the Relocation camps in the desert where the Japanese people from the west coast were held. In 1955, I went to France to teach at one of the American Air Force Bases north of Paris. While I was in Europe—two years—I had a chance to visit almost all the countries there. I enjoyed it very much and hope I can get back again—to visit—not to work.

When I returned from Europe, I spent a year teaching at a sanitorium for tubercular children on Long Island Sound in Connecticut. Then I returned to Arizona. I suppose there is where I will stay—but you can't always tell.

Besides writing, I like to dance, knit, cook, travel, bowl, study languages—you should see me trying to write German script and learn the Russian alphabet!—work in the garden and watch full moons through billowing thunder clouds.

—Z.H.

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DELUGE

by Zenna Henderson

. . . and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.
GEN. 7:17

"THE CHILDREN ARE UP already, Eva-lee?" asked David, lounging back in his chair after his first long, satisfying swallow from his morning cup.

"Foolish question, David, on Gathering Day," I laughed. "They've been up since before it was light. Have you forgotten how you used to feel?"

"Of course not." My son cradled his cup in his two hands to warm it, and watched idly until steam plumed up fragrantly. "I just forgot—oh, momentarily, I assure you—that it was Gathering Day. So far it hasn't felt much like *failova* weather."

"No, it hasn't," I answered, puckering my forehead thoughtfully. "It has felt—odd—this year. The green isn't as—Oh, good morning, 'Chell," to my daughter-of-love, "I suppose the little imps waked you first thing?"

"At least half an hour before that," yawned 'Chell. "I supposed I used to do it myself. But just wait—they'll have their yawning time when they're parents."

"Mother! Mother! Father! Gramma!"

The door slapped open and the children avalanched in, all talking shrilly at once until David waved his cup at them, and lifted one eyebrow. 'Chell laughed at the sudden silence.

"That's better," she said. "What's all the uproar?"

The children looked at one another and the five-year-old Eve was nudged to the fore, but, as usual, David started talking. "We were out gathering *panthus* leaves to make our Gathering baskets, and all at once—" he paused and nudged Eve again, "You tell, Eve. After all, it's you—"

"Oh, no!" cried 'Chell, "Not my last baby! Not already!"

"Look," said Eve solemnly. "Look at me."

She stood tiptoe and wavered a little, her arms outstretched for balance, and then she lifted slowly and carefully up into her mother's arms.

We all laughed and applauded and even 'Chell, after blotting her

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surprised tears on Eve's dark curls, laughed with us.

"Bless-a-baby!" she said, hugging her tight. "Lifting all alone already—and on Gathering Day, too! It's not everyone who can have Gathering Day for her Happy Day!" Then she sobered and pressed the solemn ceremonial kiss on each cheek. "Lift in delight all your life, Eve!" she said.

Eve matched her parents' solemnity as her father softly completed the ritual. "By the Presence and the Name and the Power, lift to good and the Glory until your Calling." And we all joined in making the Sign.

"I speak for her next," I said, holding out my arms. "Think you can lift to Gramma, Eve?"

"Well," Eve considered the gap between her and me—the chair, the breakfast table—all the obstacles before my waiting arms. And then she smiled. "Look at me," she said. "Here I come, Gramma."

She lifted carefully above the table, over-arching so high that the crisp girl-frill around the waist of her close-fitting briefs brushed the ceiling. Then she was safe in my arms.

"That's better than I did," called Simon through the laughter that followed. "I landed right in the *flahmen* jam!"

"So you did, son," laughed David, ruffling Simon's coppery-red hair. "A full dish of it."

"Now that that's taken care of, let's get organized. Are you all Gathering together?"

"No." Lytha, our teener, flushed faintly. "I—we—our party will be mostly—well—" She paused and checked her blush, shaking her dark hair back from her face. "Timmy and I are going with Beckie and Andy. We're going to the Mountain."

"Well!" David's brow lifted in mock consternation. "Mother, did you know our daughter was two-ing?"

"Not really, Father!" cried Lytha hastily, unable to resist the bait though she knew he was teasing. "Four-ing, it is, really."

"*Adonday veeah!*" he sighed in gigantic relief. "Only half the worry it might be!" He smiled at her. "Enjoy," he said, "But it ages me so much so fast that a daughter of mine is two—oh, pardon, four-ing already."

"The rest of us are going together," said Davie. "We're going to the Tangle-meadows. The *failova* were thick there last year. Bet we three get more than Lytha and her two-ing foursome! They'll be looking mostly for *flahmen* anyway!" with the enormous scorn of the almost-teen for the activities of the Teens.

"Could be," said Davie. "But after all, your sole purpose this Gathering Day is merely to Gather."

"I notice you don't turn up

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your nose at the *flahmen* after they're made into jam," said Lytha. "And you just wait, smarty, until the time comes—and it will," her cheeks pinked up a little, "When you find yourself wanting to share a *flahmen* with some gaggly giggle of a girl!"

"*Flahmen!*" muttered Davie, "Girls!"

"They're both mighty sweet, Son," laughed David. "You wait and see."

Ten minutes later, 'Chell and David and I stood at the window watching the children leave. Lytha, after nervously putting on and taking off, arranging and rearranging her Gathering Day garlands at least a dozen times, was swept up by a giggling group that zoomed in a trio and went out a quartet and disappeared in long, low lifts across the pasture-land towards the heavily wooded Mountain.

Davie tried to gather Eve up as in the past, but she stubbornly refused to be trailed, but kept insisting, "I can lift now! Let me do it. I'm big!"

Davie rolled exasperated eyes and then grinned and the three started off for Tangle-meadows in short hopping little lifts, with Eve always just beginning to lift as they landed or just landing as they lifted, her small Gathering basket bobbing along with her. Before they disappeared, however, she was trailing from Davie's free hand and the lifts were smoothing out long and longer. My thoughts went with them as I remembered the years I had Gathered the lovely luminous flowers that popped into existence in a single night, leafless, almost stemless, as though formed like dew, or falling like concentrated moonlight. No one knows now how the custom of loves sharing a *flahman* came into being, but it's firmly entrenched in the traditions of the People. To share that luminous loveliness, petal by petal, one for me and one for you and all for us—

"How pleasant that Gathering Day brings back our loves," I sighed dreamily as I stood in the kitchen and snapped my fingers for the breakfast dishes to come to me. "People that might otherwise be completely forgotten, come back so vividly every year—"

"Yes," said 'Chell, watching the tablecloth swish out the window, huddling the crumbs together to dump them in the feather-pen in back of the house. "And it's a good anniversary-marker. Most of us meet our loves at the Gathering Festival—or discover them there." She took the returning cloth and folded it away. "I never dreamed when I used to fuss with David over mudpies and playhouses that one Gathering Day he'd blossom into my love."

"*Me* blossom?" David peered around the door jamb. "Have you

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forgotten how you looked, pre-blossom? Knobby knees, straggly hair, toothless grin—!"

"David, put me down!" 'Chell struggled as she felt herself being lifted to press against the ceiling. "We're too old for such nonsense!"

"Get yourself down, then, Old One," he said from the other room. "If I'm too old for nonsense, I'm too old to platt you."

"Never mind, funny fellow," she said, "I'll do it myself." Her down-reaching hand strained toward the window and she managed to gather a handful of the early morning sun. Quickly she platted herself to the floor and tiptoed off into the other room, eyes aglint with mischief, finger hushing to her lips.

I smiled as I heard David's outcry and 'Chell's delighted laugh, but I felt my smile slant down into sadness. I leaned my arms on the windowsill and looked lovingly at all the dear familiarity around me. Before Thann's Calling, we had known so many happy hours in the meadows and skies and waters of this loved part of the Home.

"And he is still here," I thought comfortably. "The grass still bends to his feet, the leaves still part to his passing, the waters still ripple to his touch and my heart still cradles his name.

"Oh, Thann, Thann!" I wouldn't let tears form in my eyes. I smiled. "I wonder what kind of a grampa you'd have made!" I leaned my forehead on my folded arms briefly, then turned to busy myself with the straightening the rooms for the day. I was somewhat diverted from routine by finding six mismated sandals stacked, for some unfathomable reason, above the middle of Simon's bed, the top one, inches above the rest, bobbing in the breeze from the open window.

The oddness we had felt about the day turned out to be more than a passing uneasiness and we adults were hardly surprised when the children came straggling back hours before they usually did.

We hailed them from afar, lifting out to them expecting to help with their burdens of brightness, but the children didn't answer our hails. They plodded on towards the house, dragging slow feet in the abundant grass.

"What do you suppose has happened?" breathed 'Chell. "Surely not Eve—"

"Adonday veeah!" murmured David, his eyes intent on the children. "Something's wrong, but I see Eve."

"Hi, young ones," he called cheerfully, "How's the crop this year?"

The children stopped, huddled together, almost fearfully.

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"Look." Davie pushed his basket at them. Four misshapen *failova* glowed dully in the basket. No flickering, glittering brightness. No flushing and paling of petals. No crisp, edible sweetness of blossom. Only a dull glow, a sullen winking, an unappetizing crumbling.

"That's all," said Davie, his voice choking. "That's all we could find!" He was scared and outraged—outraged that his world dared to be different from what he had expected—had counted on.

Eve cried, "No, no! I have one. Look!" Her single flower was a hard-clenched *flahmen* bud with only a smudge of light at the tip.

"No *failova?*" 'Chell took Davie's proffered basket. "No *flahmen?* But they always bloom on Gathering Day. Maybe the buds —"

"No buds," said Simon, his face painfully white under the brightness of his hair. I glanced at him quickly. He seldom ever got upset over anything. What was there about this puzzling development that was stirring him?

"David!" 'Chell's face turned worriedly to him. "What's wrong? There have always been *failova!*"

"I know," said David, fingering Eve's bud and watching it crumble in his fingers. "Maybe it's only in the meadows. Maybe there's plenty in the hills."

"No," I said, "Look."

Far off towards the hills we could see the Teeners coming, slowly, clustered together, *panthus* baskets trailing.

"No *failova,*" said Lytha as they neared us. She turned her basket up, her face troubled. "No *failova* and no *flahmen.* Not a flicker on all the hills where they were so thick last year. Oh, Father, why not? It's as if the sun hadn't come up! Something's wrong."

"Nothing catastrophic, Lytha." David comforted her with a smile. "We'll bring up the matter at the next meeting of the Old ones. Someone will have the answer. It is unusual, you know." (Unheard of, he should have said.) "We'll find out then." He boosted Eve to his shoulder. "Come on, young ones, the world hasn't ended. It's still Gathering Day! I'll race you to the house. First one there gets six *koomatka* to eat all by himself! One, two, three—"

Off shot the shrieking, shouting children, Eve's little heels pummelling David's chest in her excitement. The Teeners followed for a short way and then slanted off on some project of their own, waving goodby to 'Chell and me. We women followed slowly to the house, neither speaking.

I wasn't surprised to find Simon waiting for me in my room. He sat huddled on my bed, his hands clasping and unclasp-

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ing and trembling a fine, quick trembling deeper than muscles and tendons. His face was so white it was almost luminous and the skiff of golden freckles across the bridge of his nose looked metallic.

"Simon?" I touched him briefly on his hair that was so like Thann's had been.

"Gramma." His breath caught in a half hiccough. He cleared his throat carefully as though any sudden movement would break something fragile. "Gramma," he whispered. "I can See!"

"See!" I sat down beside him because my knees suddenly evaporated. "Oh, Simon! You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do, Gramma." He rubbed his hands across his eyes. "We had just found the first *failova* and wondering what was wrong with it when everything kinda went away and I was—somewhere—Seeing!" He looked up, terrified. "It's my Gift!"

I gathered the suddenly wildly sobbing child into my arms and held him tightly until his terror spent itself and I felt his withdrawal. I let him go and watched his wet, flushed face dry and peal back to normal.

"Oh, Gramma," he said, "I don't want a Gift yet. I'm only ten. David hasn't found his Gift and he's twelve already. I don't *want* a Gift—especially this one—" he closed his eyes and shuddered. "Oh, Gramma, what I've seen already! Even the Happy scares me because it's still in the Presence!"

"It's not given to many," I said, at a loss how to comfort him. "Why, Simon, it would take a long journey back to our Befores to find one in our family who was permitted to See. It is an honor—to be able to put aside the curtain of time—"

"I don't *want* to!" Simon's eyes brimmed again. "I don't think it's a bit of fun. Do I have to?"

"Do you have to breathe?" I asked him. "You could stop if you wanted to, but your body would die. You can refuse your Gift, but part of you would die—the part of you the Power honors—your place in the Presence—your syllable of the Name." All this he knew from first consciousness, but I could feel him taking comfort from my words. "Do you realize the People have had no one to See for them since—since—why, clear back to the Peace! And now you are it! Oh, Simon, I am so proud of you!" I laughed at my own upsurge of emotion. "Oh, Simon! May I touch my thrice honored Grandson?"

With a wordless cry, he flung himself into my arms and we clung tightly, tightly, before his deep renouncing withdrawal. He looked at me then and slowly dropped his arms from around my

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neck, separation in every movement. I could see growing in the topaz tawniness of his eyes, his new set-apartness. It made me realize anew how close the Presence is to us always and how much nearer Simon was than any of us. Also, naked and trembling in my heart was the recollection that never did the People have one to See for them unless there lay ahead portentous things to See.

Both of us shuttered our eyes and looked away, Simon to veil the eyes that so nearly looked on the Presence, I, lest I be blinded by the Glory reflected in his face.

"Which reminds me," I said in a resolutely everyday voice, "I will now listen to explanations as to why those six sandals were left on, over, and among your bed this morning."

"Well," he said with a tremulous grin. "The red ones are too short—" He turned stricken, realizing eyes to me. "I won't ever be able to tell anyone anything anymore unless the Power wills it!" he cried. Then he grinned again, "And the green ones need the latchets renewed—"

A week later the usual meeting was called and David and I—we were among the Old Ones of our Group—slid into our robes. I felt a pang as I smoothed the shimmering fabric over my hips, pressing pleats in with my thumb and finger to adjust for lost weight. The last time I had worn it was the Festival the year Thann was Called. Since then I hadn't wanted to attend the routine Group meetings—not without Thann. I hadn't realized that I was losing weight.

'Chell clung to David. "I wish now that I were an Old One, too," she said. "I've got a nameless worry in the pit of my stomach heavy enough to anchor me for life. Hurry home, you two!"

I looked back as we lifted just before the turn-off. I smiled to see the warm lights begin to well up in the windows. Then my smile died. I felt, too, across my heart the shadow that made 'Chell feel it was Lighting Time before the stars had broken through the last of the day.

The blow—when it came—was almost physical, so much so that I pressed my hands to my chest, my breath coming hard, trying too late to brace against the shock. David's sustaining hand was on my arm but I felt the tremor in it, too. Around me I felt my incredulity and disbelief shared by the other Old Ones of the Group.

The Oldest spread his hands as he was deluged by a flood of half formed questions. "It has been Seen. Already our Home has been altered so far that the *failova* and *flahmen* can't come to blossom. As we accepted the fact that

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there were no *failova* and *flahmen* this year, so we must accept the fact that there will be no more Home for us."

In the silence that quivered after his words, I could feel the further stricken sag of heartbeats around me and suddenly my own heart slowed until I wondered if the Power was stilling it now—now—in the midst of this confused fear and bewilderment.

"Then we are all Called?" I couldn't recognize the choked voice that put the question. "How long before the Power summons us?"

"*We* are not Called," said the Oldest. "Only the Home is Called. We—go."

"Go!" The thought careened from one to another.

"Yes," said the Oldest. "Away from the Home. Out."

Life apart from the Home? I slumped. It was too much to be taken in all at once. Then I remembered. Simon! Oh, poor Simon! If he were Seeing clearly already—but of course he was. He was the one who had told the Oldest! No wonder he was terrified! *Simon* I said to the Oldest subvocally. *Yes* answered the Oldest. *Do not communicate to the others. He scarcely can bear the burden now. To have it known would multiply it past his bearing. Keep his secret—completely.*

I came back to the awkward whirlpool of thoughts around me.

"But," stammered someone, speaking what everyone was thinking, "Can the People *live* away from the Home? Wouldn't we die like uprooted plants?"

"We can live," said the Oldest. "This we know, as we know that the Home can no longer be our biding place."

"What's wrong? What's happening?" It was Neil—Timmys father.

"We don't know." The Oldest was shamed. "We have forgotten too much since the Peace to be able to state the mechanics of what is happening, but one of us Sees us go and the Home destroyed, so soon that we have no time to go back to the reasons."

Since we were all joined in our conference mind which is partially subvocal, all our protests and arguments and cries were quickly emitted and resolved, leaving us awkwardly trying to plan something of which we had no knowledge of our own.

"If we are to go," I said, feeling a small spurt of excitement inside my shock, "We'll have to make again. Make a tool. No, that's not the word. We have tools still. Man does with tools. No, it's a—a machine we'll have to make. Machines do to man. We haven't been possessed by machines—"

"For generations," said David. "Not since—" he paused to let our family's stream of history

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pour through his mind. "Since Eva-lee's thrice great grandfather's time."

"Nevertheless," said the Oldest. "We must make ships." His tongue was hesitant on the long unused word. "I have been in communication with the other Oldest Ones around the Home. Our Group must make six of them."

"How can we?" asked Neil. "We have no plans. We don't know such things any more. We have forgotten almost all of it. But I do know that to break free from the Home would take a pushing something that all of us together couldn't supply."

"We will have the—the fuel," said the Oldest. "When the time comes. My Befores knew the fuel. We would not need it if only our motivers had developed their Gift fully, but as they did not—

"We must each of us search the Before stream of our lives and find the details that we require in this hour of need. By the Presence, the Name and the Power, let us remember."

The evening sped away almost in silence as each mind opened and became receptive to the flow of racial memory that lay within. All of us partook in a general way of that stream that stemmed almost from the dawn of the Home. In particular, each family had some specialized area of the memory in greater degree than the others. From time to time came a sigh or a cry prefacing, "My Befores knew of the metals." or "Mine of the instruments"—the words were unfamiliar—"The instruments of pressure and temperature."

"Mine," I discovered with a glow—and a sigh—" the final putting together of the shells of ships."

"Yes," nodded David, "And also, from my father's Befores, the settings of the—the—the settings that guide the ship."

"Navigation," said Neil's deep voice. "My Befores knew of the making of the navigation machines yours knew how to set."

"And all," I said, "All of this going back to nursery school would have been unnecessary if we hadn't rested so comfortably so long on the achievements of our Befores!" I felt the indignant withdrawal of some of those about me, but the acquiescence of most of them.

When the evening ended, each of us Old Ones carried not only the burden of the doom of the Home, but a part of the past that, in the Quiet Place if each home, must, with the help of the Power, be probed and probed again, until—

"Until—," the Oldest stood suddenly, clutching the table as though he just realized the enormity of what he was saying. "Until we have the means of leaving

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the Home—before it becomes a band of dust between the stars—"

Simon and Lytha were waiting up with 'Chell when David and I returned. At the sight of our faces, Simon slipped into the bedroom and woke Davie and the two crept quietly back into the room. Simon's thought reached out ahead of him. *Did he tell?* And mine went out reassuringly. *No. And he won't.*

In spite of—or perhaps because of—the excitement that had been building up in me all evening, I felt suddenly drained and weak. I sat down, gropingly, in a chair and pressed my hands to my face. "You tell them David," I said, fighting an odd vertigo.

David shivered and swallowed hard. "There were no *failova* because the Home is being broken up. By next Gathering Day there will be no Home. It is being destroyed. We can't even say why. We have forgotten too much and there isn't time to seek out the information now, but long before next Gathering Day, we will be gone—out."

'Chell's breath caught audibly. "No Home!" she said, her eyes widening and darkening. "No Home? Oh, David, don't joke. Don't try to scare—"

"It's true." My voice had steadied now. "It has been Seen. We must build ships and seek asylum among the stars." My heart gave a perverse jump of excitement. "The Home will no longer exist. We will be homeless exiles."

"But the People away from the Home!" 'Chell's face puckered, close to tears. "How can we live anywhere else? We are a part of the Home as much as the Home is a part of us. We can't just amputate—"

"Father!" Lytha's voice was a little too loud. She said again, "Father, are all of us going together in the same ship?"

"No," said David. "Each Group by itself." Lytha relaxed visibly. "Our Group is to have six ships," he added.

Lytha's hands tightened. "Who is to go in which ship?"

"It hasn't been decided yet," said David, provoked. "How can you worry about a detail like that when the Home, *the Home* will soon be gone!"

"It's important," said Lytha, flushing. "Timmy and I—"

"Oh," said David. "I'm sorry, Lytha. I didn't know. The matter will have to be decided when the time comes."

It didn't take long for the resiliency of childhood to overcome the shock of the knowledge born on Gathering Day. Young laughter rang as brightly through the hills and meadows as always. But David and 'Chell clung closer to one another, sharing the

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heavy burden of leave-taking, as did all the adults of the Home. At times I, too, felt wildly, hopefully, that this was all a bad dream to be awakened from. But other times I had the feeling that this *was* an awakening. This was the dawn after a long twilight—a long twilight of slanting sun and relaxing shadows. Other times I felt so detached from the whole situation that wonder welled up in me to see the sudden tears, the sudden clutching of familiar things, that had become a sort of pattern among us as realization came and went. And then, there were frightening times when I felt weakness flowing into me like a river—a river that washed all the Home away on a voiceless wave. I was almost becoming more engrossed in the puzzle of me than in the puzzle of the dying Home—and I didn't like it.

David and I went often to Meeting, working with the rest of the Group on the preliminary plans for the ships. One night he leaned across the table to the Oldest and asked, "How do we know how much food will be needed to sustain us until we find asylum?"

The Oldest looked steadily back at him. "We *don't* know," he said. "We don't know that we will ever find asylum."

"Don't know?" David's eyes were blank with astonishment.

"No," said the Oldest. "We found no other habitable worlds before the Peace. We have no idea how far we will have to go or if we shall any of us live to see another Home. Each Group is to be assigned to a different sector of the sky. On Crossing Day, we say goodby—possibly forever—to all the other Groups. It may be that only one ship will plant the seeds of the People upon a new world. It may be that we will all be Called before a new Home is found."

"Then," said David. "Why don't we stay here and take our Calling with the Home?"

"Because the Power has said to go. We are given time to go back to the machines. The Power is swinging the gateway to the stars open to us. We must take the gift and do what we can with it. We have no right to deprive our children of any of the years they might have left to them."

After David relayed the message to 'Chell, she clenched both her fists tight up against her anguished heart and cried, "We can't! Oh, David! We can't! We can't leave the Home for—for—nowhere! Oh, David!" And she clung to him, wetting his shoulder with her tears.

"We can do what we must do," he said. "All of the People are sharing this sorrow so none of us must make the burden any heavier for the others. The children learn their courage from us, 'Chell. Be

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a good teacher." He rocked her close-pressed head, his hand patting her tumbled hair, his troubled eyes seeking mine.

"Mother—" David began—Eva-lee was for every-day.

"Mother, it seems to me that the Presence is pushing us out of the Home deliberately and crumpling it like an empty eggshell so we can't creep back into it. We have sprouted too few feathers on our wings since the Peace. I think we're being pushed off the branch to make us fly. This egg has been too comfortable." He laughed a little as he held 'Chell away from him and dried her cheeks with the palms of his hands. "I'm afraid I've made quite an omelette of my egg analogy, but can you think of anything really new that we have learned about Creation in our time."

"Well," I said, searching my mind, pleased immeasureably to hear my own thoughts on the lips of my son. "No, I can honestly say I can't think of one new thing."

"So if you were Called to the Presence right now and were asked, 'What do you know of My Creation?' all you could say would be 'I know all that my Befores knew—my immediate Befores, that is—I mean, my father—.'" David opened his hands and poured out emptiness. "Oh, Mother! What we have forgotten! And how content we have been with so little!"

"But some other way!" 'Chell cried. "This is so—so drastic and cruel!" "All baby birds shiver," said David, clasping her cold hands. "Sprout a pin feather, 'Chell!"

And then the planning arrived at the point where work could begin. The sandal shops were empty. The doors were closed in the fabric centers and the ceramic work rooms. The sunlight crept unshadowed again and again across the other workshops and weeds began tentative invasions of the garden plots.

Far out in the surrounding hills, those of the People who knew how, hovered in the sky, rolling back slowly by the heavy green cover of the mountainsides, to lay bare the metal-rich underearth. Then the Old Ones, making solemn mass visits from Group to Group, quietly concentrated above the bared hills and drew forth from the very bones of the Home, the bright, bubbling streams of metal, drew them forth until they flowed liquidly down the slopes to the work places—the launching sites. And the rush and the clamor and the noise of the hurried multitudes broke the silence of the hills of the Home and sent tremors through all our windows—and through our shaken souls.

I often stood at the windows of our house, watching the sky-

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pointing monsters of metal slowly coming to form. From afar they had a severe sort of beauty that eased my heart of the hurt their having-to-be caused. But it was exciting! Oh, it was beautifully exciting! Sometimes I wondered what we thought about and what we did before we started all this surge out into space. On the days that I put in my helping hours on the lifting into place of the strange different parts that had been fashioned by other Old Ones, from memories of the Before, the upsurge of power and the feeling of being one part of such a gigantic undertaking. I marveled that we had forgotten without even realizing it, the warmth and strength of working together. Oh, the People are together even more than the leaves on a tree or the scales on a *dolfeo,* but *working* together? I knew this was my first experience with its pleasant strength. My lungs seemed to breathe deeper. My reach was longer, my grasp stronger. Odd, unfinished feelings welled up inside me and I wanted to *do.* Perhaps this was the itching of my new pin-feathers. And then, sometimes when I reached an exultation that almost lifted me off my feet, would come the weakness, the sagging, the sudden desire for tears and withdrawal. I worried, a little, that there might come a time when I wouldn't be able to conceal it.

The Crossing had become a new, engrossing game for the children. At night, shivering in the unseasonable weather, cool, but not cold enough to shield, they would sit looking up at the glory-frosted sky and pick out the star they wanted for a new Home, though they knew that none they could see would actually be it. Eve always chose the brightest pulsating one in the heavens and claimed it as hers. Davie chose one that burned steadily but faintly straight up above them. But when Lytha was asked, she turned the question aside and I knew that any star with Timmy would be Home to Lytha.

Simon usually sat by himself, a little withdrawn from the rest, his eyes quiet on the brightness overhead.

"What star is yours, Simon?" I asked one evening, feeling intrusive but knowing the guard he had for any words he should not speak.

"None," he said, his voice heavy with maturity, "No star for me."

"You mean you'll wait and see?" I asked.

"No," said Simon. "There won't be one for me."

My heart sank. "Simon, you haven't been Called, have you?"

"No," said Simon. "Not yet. I will see a new Home, but I will be Called from its sky."

"Oh, Simon," I cried softly,

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trying to find a comfort for him. "How wonderful to be able to See a new Home!"

"Not much else left to See," said Simon. "Not that has words." And I saw a flare of Otherside touch his eyes. "But Gramma, you should see the Home when the last moment comes! That's one of the things I have no words for."

"But we will have a new Home, then," I said, going dizzily back to a subject I hoped I could comprehend. "You said —"

"I can't See beyond my Calling," said Simon. "I will see a new Home. I will be Called from its strange sky. I can't See what is for the People there. Maybe they'll all be Called with me. For me there's flame and brightness and pain—then the Presence. That's all I know.

"But, Gramma—" his voice had returned to that of a normal ten-year-old, "Lytha's feeling awful bad. Help her."

The children were laughing and frolicking in the thin blanket of snow that whitened the hills and meadows, their clear, untroubled laughter echoing through the windows to me and 'Chell who, with close-pressed lips, were opening the winter chests that had been closed so short a time ago. 'Chell fingered the bead stitching on the toes of one little ankle-high boot.

"What will we need in the new Home, Eva-lee?" she asked despairingly.

"We have no way of knowing," I said. "We have no idea of what kind of Home we'll find." *If any, if any, if any,* our unspoken thoughts throbbed together.

"I've been thinking about that," said 'Chell. "What will it be like? Will we be able to lift, or will we be bound to the ground? Will we be able to live as we do now or will we have to go back to machines and the kind of times that went with our machines? Will we still be one People or be separated mind and soul?" Her hands clenched on a bright sweater and a tear slid down her cheek. "Oh, Eva-lee, maybe we won't even be able to feel the Presence there!"

"You know better than that!" I chided. "The Presence is with us always, even if we have to go to the ends of the Universe. Since we can't know now what the new Home will be like, let's not waste our tears on it." I shook out a gaily-patterned quilted skirt. "Who knows?" I laughed, "Maybe it will be a water world and we'll become fish. Or a fire world and we the flames!"

"We can't adjust quite that much!" protested 'Chell, smiling moistly as she dried her face on the sweater. "But it is a comfort to know we can change some to match our environment."

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I reached for another skirt and paused, hand outstretched. "'Chell," I said, taken by a sudden idea. "What if the new Home is already inhabited? What if life is already there!"

"Why then, so much the better," said 'Chell. "Friends, help, places to live—"

"They might not accept us," I said.

"But refugees—homeless!" protested 'Chell. "If any in need came to the Home—"

"Even if they were different?"

"In the Presence, all are the same," said 'Chell.

"But remember," my knuckles whitened on the skirt. "Only remember far enough back and you will find the Days of Difference before the Peace."

And 'Chell remembered. She turned her stricken face to me. "You mean there might be no welcome for us if we do find a new Home?"

"If we could treat our own that way, how might others treat strangers?" I asked, shaking out the scarlet skirt. "But, please the Power, it will not be so. We can only pray."

It turned out that we had little need to worry about what kind of clothing or anything else to take with us. We would have to go practically possessionless — there was room for only the irreducible minimum of personal effects. There was considerable of an uproar and many loud lamentations when Eve found out that she could not take all of her play-People with her, and, when confronted by the necessity of making a choice—one, single one of her play-People, she threw them all in a tumbled heap in the corner of her room, shrieking that she would take none at all. A sharp smack of David's hand on her bare thighs for her tantrum, and a couple of enveloping hugs for her comfort and she sniffed up her tears and straightened out her play-People into a staggering, tumbling row across the floor. It took her three days to make her final selection. She chose the one she had named the Listener.

"She's not a him and he's not a her," she had explained. "This play-People is to listen."

"To what?" teased Davie.

"To anything I have to tell and can't tell anyone," said Eve with great dignity. "You don't even have to verb'lize to Listener. All you have to do is to touch and Listener knows what you feel and it tells you why it doesn't feel good and the bad goes away."

"Well, ask the Listener how to make the bad grammar go away," laughed Davie. "You've got your sentences all mixed up."

"Listener knows what I mean and so do you!" retorted Eve.

So when Eve made her choice and stood hugging Listener and looking with big solemn eyes at

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the rest of her play-People, Davie suggested casually, "Why don't you go bury the rest of them? They're the same as Called now and we don't leave cast-asides around."

And from then until the last day, Eve was happy burying and digging up her play-People, always finding better, more advantageous, or prettier places to make her miniature casting-place.

Lytha sought me out one evening as I leaned over the stone wall around the feather-pen, listening to the go-to-bed contented cluckings and cooings. She leaned with me on the rough grey stones and, snapping an irridescent feather to her hand, smoothed her fingers back and forth along it wordlessly. We both listened idly to Eve and Davie. We could hear them talking together somewhere in the depths of the *koomatka* bushes beyond the feather-pen.

"What's going to happen to the Home after we're gone?" asked Eve idly.

"Oh, it's going to shake and crack wide open and fire and lava will come out and everything will fall apart and burn up," said Davie, no more emotionally than Eve.

"Ooo!" said Eve, caught in the imagination, "Then what will happen to my play-People? Won't they be all right under here? No one can see them."

"Oh, they'll be set on fire and go up in a blaze of glory," said Davie.

"A blaze of glory!" Eve drew a long happy sigh. "In a blaze of glory! Inna blaza glory! Oh, Davie! I'd like to see it! Can I, Davie? Can I?"

"Silly *toola*!" said Davie. "If you were here to see it, *you'd* go up in a blaze of glory, too!" And he lifted up from the *koomatka* bushes, the time for his chores with the animals hot on his heels.

"Inna blaza glory! Inna blaza glory!" sang Eve happily, "All the play-People inna blaza glory!" Her voice faded to a tuneless hum as she left, too.

"Gramma," said Lytha, "Is it really true?"

"Is what really true?" I asked.

"That the Home won't be any more and that we will be gone."

"Why yes, Lytha, why do you doubt it?"

"Because—because—" she gestured with the feather at the wall. "Look, it's all so solid—the stones set each to the other so solidly—so—so *always-looking*. How can it all come apart?"

"You know from your first consciousness that nothing This-side is forever," I said. "Nothing at all except Love. And even that gets so tangled up in the things of This-side that when your love is Called—" The memory of Thann was a heavy burning inside me—"Oh, Lytha! To look into the face

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of your love and know that Something has come apart and that never again This-side will you find him whole!"

And then I knew I had said the wrong thing. I saw Lytha's too-young eyes looking in dilated horror at the sight of her love—her not-quite-yet love, being pulled apart by this same whatever that was pulling the Home apart. I turned the subject.

"I want to go to the Lake for a goodby," I said. "Would you like to go with me?"

"No, thank you, Gramma." Hers was a docile, little girl voice—oh surely much too young to be troubled about loves as yet! "We Teeners are going to watch the new metal-melting across the hills. It's fascinating. I'd like to be able to do things like that."

"You can—you could have—" I said, "If we had trained our youth as we should have."

"Maybe I'll learn," said Lytha, her eyes intent on the feather. She sighed deeply and dissolved the feather into a faint puff of blue smoke. "Maybe I'll learn." And I knew her mind was not on metal-melting.

She turned away and then back again. "Gramma, The Love—" she stopped. I could feel her groping for words. "The Love is forever, isn't it."

"Yes," I said.

"Love This-side is part of The Love, isn't it?"

"A candle lighted from the sun," I said.

"But the candle will go out!" she cried. "Oh, Gramma! The candle will go out in the winds of the Crossing!" She turned her face from me and whispered, "Especially if it never quite got lighted."

"There are other candles," I murmured, knowing how like a lie it must sound to her.

"But never the same!" She snatched herself away from my side. "It isn't fair! It isn't fair!" and she streaked away across the frost-scorched meadow.

And as she left, I caught a delightful, laughing picture of two youngsters racing across a little lake, reeling and spinning as the waves under their feet lifted and swirled, wrapping white lace around their slender brown ankles. Everything was blue and silver and laughter and fun. I was caught up in the wonder and pleasure until I suddenly realized that it wasn't my memory at all. Thann and I had another little lake we loved more. I had seen someone else's Happy Place that would dissolve like mine with the Home. Poor Lytha.

The crooked sun was melting the latest snow the day all of us Old ones met beside the towering shells of the ships. Each Old One was wrapped against the chilly wind. No personal shields today.

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The need for power was greater for the task ahead than for comfort. Above us, the huge bright curved squares of metal, clasped each to each with the old joinings, composed the shining length of each ship. Almost I could have cried to see the scarred earth beneath them—the trampledness that would never green again, the scars that would never heal. I blinked up the brightness of the nearest ship, up to the milky sky, and blinked away from its strangeness.

"The time is short," said the Oldest. "A week."

"A week." The sigh went through the group.

"Tonight the ship loads must be decided upon. Tomorrow the inside machines must be finished. The next day, the fuel." The Oldest shivered and wrapped himself in his scarlet mantle. "The fuel that we put so completely out of our minds after the Peace. It's potential for evil was more than its service to us. But it is there. It is still there." He shivered again and turned to me.

"Tell us again," he said. "We must complete the shells." And I told them again, without words, only with the shaping of thought to thought. Then the company of Old Ones lifted slowly above the first ship, clasping hands in a circle like a group of dancing children and, leaning forward into the circle, thought the thought I had shaped for them.

For a long time there was only the thin fluting of the cold wind past the point of the ship and then the whole shell of metal quivered and dulled and became fluid. For the span of three heartbeats it remained so and then it hardened again, complete, smooth, seamless, one cohesive whole from tip to base, broken only by the round ports at intervals along its length.

In succession the other five ships were made whole, but the intervals between the ships grew longer and greyer as the strength drained from us, and, before we were finished, the sun had gone behind a cloud and we were all shadows leaning above shadows, fluttering like shadows.

The weakness caught me as we finished the last one. David received me as I drifted down, helpless and folded on myself. He laid me on the brittle grass and sat panting beside me, his head drooping. I lay as though I had become fluid and knew that something more than the fatigue of the task we had just finished had drained me. "But I *have* to be strong!" I said desperately, knowing weakness had no destiny among the stars. I stared up at the grey sky while a tear drew a cold finger from the corner of my eye to my ear.

"We're just not used to using the Power," said David softly.

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"I know, I know," I said, knowing that he did not know. I closed my eyes and felt the whisper of falling snow upon my face, each palm-sized flake melting into a tear.

Lytha stared from me to David, her eyes wide and incredulous. "But you *knew,* Father! I told you! I told you Gathering Night!"

"I'm sorry, Lytha," said David. "There was no other way to do it. Ships fell by lot and Timmy's family and ours will be in different ships."

"Then let me go to his ship or let him come to mine!" she cried, her cheeks flushing and paling.

"Families must remain together," I said, my heart breaking for her. "Each ship leaves the Home with the assumption that it is alone. If you went in the other ship, we might never all be together again."

"But Timmy and I—we might someday be a family! We might —" Lytha's voice broke. She pressed the backs of her hands against her cheeks and paused. Then she went on quietly. "I would go with Timmy, even so."

'Chell and David exchanged distressed glances. "There's not room for even one of you to change your place. The loads are computed, the arrangements finished," I said, feeling as though I were slapping Lytha.

"And besides," said 'Chell, taking Lytha's hands. "It isn't as though you and Timmy were loves. You have only started twoing. Oh, Lytha, it was such a short time ago that you had your Happy Day. Don't rush so into growing up!"

"And if I told you Timmy is my love!" cried Lytha.

"Can you tell us so in truth, Lytha?" said 'Chell, "And say that Timmy feels that you are his love?"

Lytha's eyes dropped. "Not for sure," she whispered. "But in time—" She threw back her head impetuously, light swirling across her dark hair. "It isn't fair! We haven't had time!" she cried. "Why did all this have to happen now? Why not later? Or sooner?" she faltered, "Before we started twoing! If we have to part now, we might never know—or live our lives without a love because he is really—I am—" She turned and ran from the room, her face hidden.

I sighed and eased myself up from her chair. "I'm old, David," I said. "I ache with age. Things like this weary me beyond any resting."

It was sometime after midnight the next night that I felt Neil call to me. The urgency of his call hurried me into my robe and out of the door, quietly, not to rouse the house.

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"Eva-lee." His greeting hands on my shoulders were cold through my robe and the unfamiliar chilly wind whipped my hems around my bare ankes. "Is Lytha home?"

"Lytha?" The unexpectedness of the question snatched the last web of sleepiness out of my mind. "Of course. Why?"

"I don't think she is," said Neil. "Timmy's gone with all our camping gear and I think she's gone with him."

My mind flashed back into the house, Questing. Before my hurried feet could get there, I knew Lytha was gone. But I had to touch the undented pillow and lift the smooth spread before I could convince myself. Back in the garden that flickered black and gold as swollen clouds raced across the distorted full moon, Neil and I exchanged concerned looks.

"Where could they have gone?" he asked. "Poor kids. I've already Quested the whole neighborhood and I sent Rosh up to the hill-place to get something—he thought. He brought it back but said nothing about the kids."

I could see the tightening of the muscles in his jaws as he tilted his chin in the old familiar way, peering at me in the moonlight.

"Did Timmy say anything to you about—about anything?" I stumbled.

"Nothing—the only thing that could remotely—well, you know both of them were upset about being in different ships and Timmy—well, he got all worked up and said he didn't believe anything was going to happen to the Home, that it was only a late Spring and he thought we were silly to go rushing off into Space —"

"Lytha's words Timmyized," I said. "We've got to find them."

"Carla's frantic." Neil shuffled his feet and put his hands into his pockets, hunching his shoulders as the wind freshened. "If only we had *some* idea. If we don't find them tonight we'll have to alert the Group tomorrow. Timmy'd never live down the humiliation—"

"I know—'Touch a teener—touch a tender spot.'" I quoted absently, my mind chewing on something long forgotten or hardly noticed. "Clearance," I murmured. And Neil closed his mouth on whatever he was going to say as I waited patiently for the vague drifting and isolated flashes in my mind to reproduce the thought I sought.

—Like white lace around their bare brown ankles—

"I have it," I said. "At least I have an idea. Go tell Carla. I've gone for them. Tell her not to worry."

"Blessings," said Neil, his hands quick and heavy on my shoulders. "You and Thann have

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always been our cloak against the wind, our hand up the hill—" And he was gone towards Tanglemeadows and Carla.

You and Thann—you and Thann. I was lifting through the darkness, my personal shield activated against the acceleration of my going. Even Neil forgets sometimes that Thann is gone on ahead, I thought, my heart lifting to the memory of Thann's aliveness. And suddenly the night was full of Thann—of Thann and me—laughing in the skies, climbing the hills, dreaming in the moonlight. Fouring with Carla and Neil. Twoing after Gathering Day. The bitter-sweet memories came so fast that I almost crashed into the piney sighings of a hillside. I lifted above it barely in time. One treetop drew its uppermost twig across the curling of the bare sole of my foot.

Maybe Timmy's right! I thought suddenly. Maybe Simon and the Oldest are all wrong. How can I possibly leave the Home with Thann still here—*waiting.* Then I shook myself, quite literally, summersaulting briskly in mid-air. Foolish thoughts, trying to cram Thann back into the limitations of an existance he had out-grown!

I slanted down into the cup of the hills towards the tiny lake I had recognized from Lytha's thought. This troubled night it had no glitter or gleam. Its waves were much too turbulant for walking or dancing or even for daring. I landed on a pale strip of sand at its edge and shivered as a wave dissolved the sand under my feet into a shaken quiver and then withdrew to let it solidify again.

"Lytha!" I called softly, Questing ahead of my words. "Lytha!" There was no response in the windfilled darkness. I lifted to the next pale crescent of sand, feeling like a driven cloud myself. "Lytha! Lytha!" Calling on the family band so it would be perceptible to her alone and Timmy wouldn't have to know until she told him. Lytha!"

"Gramma!" Astonishment had squeezed out the answer. "Gramma!" The indignation was twice as heavy to make up for the first involuntary response.

"May I come to you?" I asked, taking refuge from my own emotion in ritual questions that would leave Lytha at least the shreds of her pride. There was no immediate reply. "May I come to you?" I repeated.

"You may come." Her thoughts were remote and cold as she guided me in to the curve of hillside and beach.

She and Timmy were snug and secure and very unhappily restless in the small camp cubical. They had even found some Glowers somewhere. Most of them had died of the lack of summer, but

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this small cluster clung with their fragile-looking legs to the roof of the cubical and shed a warm golden light over the small area. My heart contracted with pity and my eyes stung a little as I saw how like a child's playhouse they had set up the cubical, complete with the two sleeping mats carefully the cubical's small width apart with a curtain hiding them from each other.

They had risen ceremoniously as I entered, their faces carefully respectful to an Old One—no Gramma-look in the face of either. I folded up on the floor and they sat again, their hands clasping each other for comfort.

"There is scarcely time left for an outing," I said casually, holding up one finger to the Glowers. One loosed itself and glided down to claps its wiry feet around my finger. Its glowing paled and flared and hid any of our betraying expressions. Under my idle talk I could feel the cry of the two youngsters—wanting some way in honor to get out of this impasse. Could I find the way or would they stubbornly have to—

"We have our lives before us." Timmy's voice was carefully expressionless.

"A brief span if it's to be on the Home," I said. "We must be out before the week ends."

"We do not choose to believe that." Lytha's voice trembled a little.

"I respect your belief," I said formally, "But fear you have insufficient evidence to support it."

"Even so," her voice was just short of a sob. "Even so, however short, we will have it together—"

"Yes, without your mothers or fathers or any of us," I said placidly, "And then finally, soon, without the Home. Still it has its points. It isn't given to everyone to be—in—at the death of a world. It's a shame that you'll have no one to tell it to. That's the best part of anything, you know, telling it—sharing it."

Lytha's face crumpled and she turned it away from me.

"And if the Home doesn't die," I went on. "That will truly be a joke on us. We won't even get to laugh about it because we won't be able to come back, being so many days gone, not knowing. So you will have the whole Home to yourself. Just think! A whole Home! A new world to begin all over again—alone—" I saw the two kids' hands convulse together and Timmy's throat worked painfully. So did mine. I knew the aching of having to start a new world over—alone. After Thann was Called. "But such space! An emptiness from horizon to horizon—from pole to pole—from you two! Nobody else anywhere—anywhere. *If* the Home doesn't die—"

Lytha's slender shoulders were shaking now, and they both

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turned their suddenly so-young faces to me. I nearly staggered under the avalanche of their crying-out—all without a word. They poured out all their longing and uncertainty and protest and rebellion. Only the young could build up such a burden and have the strength to bear it. Finally Timmy came to words.

"We only want a chance. Is that too much to ask? Why should this happen, now, to us?"

"Who are we," I asked sternly, "To presume to ask *why* of the Power? For all our lives we have been taking happiness and comfort and delight and never asking *why*, but now that sorrow and separation, pain and discomfort are coming to us from the same Power, we are crying *why*. We have taken unthinkingly all that has been given to us unasked, but now that we must take sorrow for a while, you want to refuse to take, like silly babies whose milk is cold!"

I caught a wave of desolation and lostness from the two and hurried on. "But don't think the Power has forgotten you. You are as completely enwrapped now as you ever were. Can't you trust your love—or your possible love to the Power that suggested love to you in the first place? I promise you, I *promise* you, that no matter where you go, together or apart if the Power leaves you life, you will find love. And even if it turns out that you do not find it together, you'll never forget these first magical steps you have taken together towards your own true loves."

I let laughter into my voice. "Things change! Remember, Lytha, it wasn't so long ago that Timmy was a—if you'll pardon the expression—'gangle-legged, clumsy *poodah* that you'd rather be caught dead than ganging with, let alone twoing'."

"And he was, too!" Lytha's voice had a hiccough in it, but a half smile, too.

"You were no vision of delight, yourself," said Timmy, "I never saw such stringy hair—"

"It was *supposed* to look like that—"

Their wrangling was a breath of fresh air after the unnatural, uncomfortable emotional binge they had been on.

"It's quite possible that you two might change—"I stopped abruptly. "Wait!" I said. "Listen!"

"To what?" Lytha's face was puzzled. How could I tell her I heard Simon crying, "Gramma! Gramma!" Simon at home, in bed, miles and miles—

"Out, quick!" I scrambled up from the floor. "Oh, hurry!" Panic was welling up inside me. The two snatched up their small personal bundles as I pushed them, bewildered and protesting ahead of me out into the inky blackness of the violent night. For a long,

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terrified moment I stood peering up into the darkness, trying to see, trying to hear, trying to interpret! Then I screamed, "Lift! Lift!" and, snatching at them both, I launched us upward, away from the edge of the lake. The clouds snatched back from the moon and its light poured down onto the convulsed lake. There was a crack like the loudest of thunder—a grinding, twisting sound—the roar and surge of mighty waters and the lake-bed below us broke cleanly from one hill to another, pulling itself apart and tilting to pour all its moon-bright waters down into the darkness of the gigantic split in the earth. And the moon was glittering only on the shining mud left behind in the lake bottom. With a frantic speed that seemed so slow I enveloped the children and shot with them as far up and away as I could before the ear-splitting roar of returning steam threw us even farther. We reeled drunkenly away, and away, until we stumbled across the top of a hill. We clung to each other in terror as the mighty plume of steam rose and rose and split the clouds and still rose, rolling white and awesome. Then, as casually as a shutting door, the lake-bed tilted back and closed itself. In the silence that followed, I fancied I could hear the hot rain beginning to fall to fill the emptiness of the lake again—a pool of rain no larger than my hand in a lake bottom.

"Oh, poor Home," whispered Lytha, "Poor hurting Home! It's dying!" And then, on the family band, Lytha whispered to me *Timmy's my love, for sure, Gramma and I am his, but we're willing to let the Power hold our love for us, until your promise is kept.*

I gathered the two to me and I guess we all wept a little, but we had no words to exchange, no platitudes, only the promise, the acquiescence, the trust—and the sorrow.

We went home. Neil met us just beyond our feather-pen and received Timmy with a quiet thankfulness and they went home together. Lytha and I went first into our household's Quiet Place and then to our patient beds.

I stood with the other Old Ones high on the cliff above the narrow valley, staring down with them at the raw heap of stones and earth that scarred the smooth valley floor. All eyes were intent on the excavation and every mind so much with the Oldest as he toiled out of sight, that our concentrations were almost visible flames above each head.

I heard myself gasp with the others as the Oldest slowly emerged, his clumsy heavy shielding hampering his lifting. The brisk mountain breeze whined as it whipped past suddenly activat-

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ed personal shields as we reacted automatically to possible danger even though our shields were tissue paper to tornadoes against this unseen death should it be loosed. The Oldest stepped back from the hole until the sheer rock face stopped him. Slowly a stirring began in the shadowy depths and then the heavy square that shielded the thumb-sized block within, lifted into the light. It trembled and turned and set itself into the heavy metal box prepared for it. The lid clicked shut. By the time six boxes were filled, I felt the old—or rather, the painfully new—weariness seize me and I clung to David's arm. He patted my hand, but his eyes were wide with dreaming and I forced myself upright. "I don't like me any more," I thought. "Why do I things like this? Where has *my* enthusiasm and wonder gone? I am truly old and yet—" I wiped the cold beads of sweat from my upper lip and, lifting with the others, hovered over the canyon, preparatory to conveying the six boxes to the six shells of ships that they were to sting into life.

It was the last day. The sun was shining with a brilliance it hadn't known in weeks. The winds that wandered down from the hills were warm and sweet. The earth beneath us that had so recently learned to tremble and shift, was quietly solid for a small while. Everything about the Home was suddenly so dear that it seemed a delirious dream that death was less than a week away for it. Maybe it was only some pre-adolescent, unpatterned behavior—. But one look at Simon convinced me. His eyes were aching with things he had had to See. His face was hard under the soft contours of childhood and his hands trembled as he clasped them. I hugged him with my heart and he smiled a thank you and relaxed a little.

'Chell and I set the house to rights and filled the vases with fresh water and scarlet leaves because there were no flowers. David opened the corral gate and watched the beasts walk slowly out into the tarnished meadows. He threw wide the door of the feather-pen and watched the ruffle of feathers, the inquiring peering, the hesitant walk into freedom. He smiled as the master of the pen strutted vocally before the flock. Then Eve gathered up the four eggs that lay rosy and new in the nests and carried them into the house to put them in the green egg dish.

The family stood quietly together. "Go say goodby," said David. "Each of you say goodby to the Home."

And everyone went, each by himself, to his favorite spot. Even Eve burrowed herself out of sight in the *Kommatka* bush where the

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leaves locked above her head and made a tiny Eve-sized green twilight. I could hear her soft croon, "Inna blaza glory, play-People! Inna blaza glory!"

I sighed to see Lytha's straight-as-an-arrow flight toward Timmy's home. Already Timmy was coming. I turned away with a pang. Supposing even after the lake they—no, I comforted myself. They trust the Power—

How could I go to any one place I wondered, standing by the window of my room. All of the Home was too dear to leave. When I went I would truly be leaving Thann—all the paths he walked with me, the grass that bent to his step, the trees that shaded him in summer, the very ground that held his cast-aside. I slid to my knees and pressed my cheek against the side of the window frame. "Thann, Thann!" I whispered. "Be with me. Go with me since I must go. Be my strength!" And clasping my hands tight, I pressed my thumbs hard against my crying mouth.

We all gathered again, solemn and tear-stained. Lytha was still frowning and swallowing to hold back her sobs. Simon looked at her, his eyes big and golden, but he said nothing and turned away. 'Chell left the room quietly and, before she returned, the soft sound of music swelled from the walls. We all made the Sign and prayed the Parting prayers, for truly we were dying to this world. The whole house, the whole of the Home was a Quiet Place today and each of us without words laid the anguishing of this day of parting before the Presence and received comfort and strength.

Then each of us took up his share of personal belongings and was ready to go. We left the house, the music reaching after us as we went. I felt a part of me die when we could no longer hear the melody.

We joined the neighboring families on the path to the ships and there were murmurs and gestures and even an occasional excited laugh. No one seemed to want to lift. Our feet savored every step of this last walk on the Home. No one lifted, that is, except Eve, who was still intrigued by her new accomplishment. Her short little hops amused everyone and, by the time she had picked herself out of the dust three times and had been disentangled from the branches of overhanging trees twice and finally firmly set in place on David's shoulder, there were smiles and tender laughter and the road lightened even though clouds were banking again.

I stood at the foot of the long lift to the door of the ship and stared upward. People brushing past me were only whisperings and passing shadows.

"How can they?" I thought

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despairingly out of the surge of weakness that left me clinging to the wall. "How can they do it? Leaving the Home so casually!" Then a warm hand crept into mine and I looked down into Simon's eyes. "Come on, Gramma," he said. "It'll be all right."

"I—I—" I looked around me helplessly, then, kneeling swiftly, I took up a handful of dirt—a handful of the Home—and, holding it tightly, I lifted up the long slant with Simon.

Inside the ship we put our things away in their allotted spaces and Simon tugged me out into the corridor and into a room banked with dials and switches and all the vast array of incomprehensibles that we had all called into being for this terrible moment. No one was in the room except the two of us. Simon walked briskly to a chair in front of a panel and sat down.

"Its all set," he said, "For the sector of the sky they gave us, but it's wrong." Before I could stop him, his hands moved over the panels, shifting, adjusting, changing.

"Oh, Simon!" I whispered, "You mustn't!"

"I must," said Simon. "Now it's set for the sky I See."

"But they'll notice and change them all back," I trembled.

"No," said Simon. "It's such a small change that they won't notice it. And we will be where we have to be when we have to be."

It was as I stood there in the control room that I left the Home. I felt it fade away and become as faint as a dream. I said goodby to it so completely that it startled me to catch a glimpse of a mountain top through one of the ports as we hurried back to our spaces. Suddenly my heart was light and lifting, so much so that my feet didn't even touch the floor. Oh, how wonderful! What adventures ahead! I felt as though I were spiraling up into a bright Glory that outshone the sun—

Then, as suddenly, came the weakness. My very bones dissolved in me and collapsed me down on my couch. Darkness rolled across me and breathing was a task that took all my weakness to keep going. I felt vaguely the tightening of the restraining straps around me and the clasp of Simon's hand around my clenched fist.

"Half an hour," the Oldest murmured.

"Half an hour," the People echoed, amplifying the murmur. I felt myself slipping into the corporate band of communication, feeling with the rest of the Group the incredible length and heartbreaking shortness of the time.

Then I lost the world again. I was encased in blackness. I was suspended, waiting, hardly even wondering.

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And then it came—The Call.

How unmistakable! I was Called back into the Presence! My hours were totaled. It was all finished. This-side was a preoccupation that concerned me no longer. My face must have lighted as Thann's had. All the struggle, all the sorrow, all the separation—finished. Now would come the three or four days during which I must prepare, dispose of my possessions, say my goodbys—Goodbys? I struggled up against the restraining straps. But we were leaving! In less than half an hour I would have no quiet, cool bed to lay me down upon when I left my body, no fragrant grass to have pulled up over my cast-aside, no solemn sweet remembrance by my family in the next Festival for those Called during the year!

Simon I called subvocally. *You know!* I cried. *What shall I do?*

I See you staying. His answer came placidly.

Staying? Oh how quickly I caught the picture! How quickly my own words came back to me, coldly white against the darkness of my confusion. *Such space and emptiness from horizon to horizon, from pole to pole, from sky-top to ground. And only me. Nobody else anywhere, anywhere!*

Stay here all alone? I asked Simon. But he wasn't Seeing me any more. Already I was alone. I felt the frightened tears start and then I heard Lytha's trusting voice—*until your promise is kept.* All my fear dissolved. All my panic and fright blazed up suddenly in a repeat of the Call.

"Listen!" I cried, my voice high and excited, my heart surging joyously, "Listen!"

"Oh, David! Oh, 'Chell! I've been Called! Don't you hear it? Don't you hear it!"

"Oh, Mother, no! No! You must be mistaken!" David loosed himself and bent over me.

"No," whispered 'Chell. "I feel it. She is Called."

"Now I can stay," I said, fumbling at the straps. "Help me David, Help me."

"But you're not summoned right now!" cried David. "Father knew four days before he was received into the Presence. We can't leave you alone in a doomed, empty world!"

"An empty world!" I stood up quickly, holding to David to steady myself. "Oh, David! A world full of all dearness and nearness and remembering! And doomed? It will be a week yet. I will be received before then. Let me out! Oh, let me out!"

"Stay with us, Mother!" cried David, taking both my hands in his. "We need you. We can't let you go. All the tumult and upheaval that's to start so soon for the Home—"

"How do we know what tumult and upheaval you will be going through in the Crossing?" I asked.

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"But beyond whatever comes there's a chance of a new life waiting for you. But for me—. What of four days from now? What would you do with my cast-aside? What could you do but push it out into the black nothingness. Let it be with the Home. Let it at least become dust among familiar dust!" I felt as excited as a Teener. "Oh, David! To be with Thann again!"

I turned to Lytha and quickly unfastened her belt. "There'll be room for one more in this ship," I said.

For a long moment, we looked into each other's eyes and then, almost swifter than thought, Lytha was up and running for the big door. My thoughts went ahead of her and before Lytha's feet lifted out into the open air, all the Old Ones in the ship knew what had happened and their thoughts went out. Before Lytha was halfway up the little hills that separated ship from ship, Timmy surged into sight and gathered her close as they swung back around towards our ship.

Minutes ran out of the half hour like icy beads from a broken string, but finally I was slanting down from the ship, my cheeks wet with my own tears and those of my family. Clearly above the clang of the closing door I heard Simon's call, *Goodby, Gramma! I told you it'd be all right. See—you—soon!*

Hurry, hurry, hurry, whispered my feet as I ran. *Hurry hurry hurry* whispered the wind as I lifted away from the towering ships. *Now now now* whispered my heart as I turned back from a safe distance my skirts whipped by the rising wind, my hair lashing across my face.

The six slender ships pointing at the sky were like silver needles against the rolling black clouds. Suddenly there were only five—then four—then three. Before I could blink the tears from my eyes, the rest were gone, and the ground where they had stood flowed back on itself and crackled with cooling.

The fingers of the music drew me back into the house. I breathed deeply of the dear familiar odors. I straightened a branch of the scarlet leaves that had slipped awry in the blue vase. I steadied myself against a sudden shifting under my feet and my shield activated as hail spattered briefly through the window. I looked out, filled with a great peace, to the swell of browning hills, to the upward reach of snow-whitened mountains, to the brilliant huddled clumps of trees sowing their leaves on the icy wind. "My Home!" I whispered, folding my heart around it all, knowing what my terror and lostness would have been had I stayed behind without the Call.

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With a sigh, I went out to the kitchen and counted the four rosy eggs in the green dish. I fingered the stove into flame and, lifting one of the eggs, cracked it briskly against the pan.

That night there were no stars, but the heavy rolls of clouds were lighted with fitful lightnings and somewhere far over the horizon the molten heart of a mountain range was crimson and orange against the night. I lay on my bed letting the weakness wash over me, a tide that would soon bear me away. The soul is a lonely voyager at any time, but the knowledge that I was the last person in a dying world was like a weight crushing me. I was struggling against the feeling when I caught a clear, distinct call—

"Gramma!"

"Simon!" My lips moved to his name.

"We're all fine, Gramma, and I just Saw Eve with two children of her own, so they *will* make it to a new Home."

"Oh, Simon! I'm so glad you told me!" I clutched my bed as it rocked and twisted. I heard stones falling from the garden wall, then one wall of my room dissolved into dust that glowed redly before it settled.

"Things are a little untidy here," I said. "I must get out another blanket. It's a little drafty, too."

"You'll be all right, Gramma." Simon's thought came warmly. "Will you wait for me when you get Otherside?"

"If I can," I promised.

"Good night, Gramma," said Simon.

"Good night, Simon." I cradled my face on my dusty pillow. "Good night."

THE LIGHT AND THE SADNESS

(In gratitude to Zenna Henderson for the "People".)

And the sadness that is light
blistered and bared her
and she was alone.
From the zone
of the sun a voice came like honey
thick and insistent into her
loneliness and its honeycomb.
Bathed in that sweet food she rose
and entered the light till
her skin lay smooth and she was clothed.

And the light that is sadness
burned out in the sun.

—JEANNETTE NICHOLS

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Those of us who have not yet been paralyzed by the 21" tube in our living rooms are prone to occasional melancholia about many things it has replaced—among them the "B film." Of course, we can still flip a dial and catch an oldie, but it's a little like exhuming your old mongrel pup. Below is a new-fashioned ghost story concerning a most unusual B film. Why don't you yell at your neighbor to turn the set down and dig in.—E.L.F.

FAED-OUT

by Avram Davidson

IN AN OLD BROWN HOUSE ON Cheromoya in the foothills of the canyon-cut range which parts The Valley from L.A.—in short, in Hollywood—in between a Chiropractic College which had no charter and the premises of an unfrocked rabbi who now practiced as a marriage counsellor, lived Philip Farnel, world-famed star of stage and screen. P. Farnel was a lovable and G-d-fearing little man who was so far from chicanery in any form that he even mailed back to the General Telephone System the occasional dimes in extra change which came his way in coin-boxes. Nature, however, had endowed him with a ratty and evil face surmounted by a bulging skull sparsely adorned with hair and divided by a mouthful of irregular and jutting teeth. On the strength of the ancient and time-tested axiom, If Life Hands You A Lemon, Make Lemonade, Phil had sought and obtained work as a moving picture and theatrical villain.

Success on the peripatetic stage had been moderate and full of interest, but when, in 1925, Philip Farnel first saw Hollywood, when he observed the great studios looming like cathedrals amid the orange-groves, when he looked upon the palaces of the great stars gleaming alabaster and graced with cypresses, roses, and bougainvillea, as the villas and latifundia of ancient Rome—seeing the great people themselves riding by like the wind in their great custom-made cars, red, white, mauve, cerise, pearl grey and shocking pink—he said a farewell to the foot-

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lights and the one-night stands and even the occasional parts in New York successes. He turned up at the office of a reputable agent with his stills and his scrap-book, and within a week he was playing a disreputable sidekick to Noah Beery in a motion picture involving saloons, stagecoaches, and kidnapped schoolteachers.

He never had more than a secondary role in a Grade A picture, but he often was the lead scoundrel in B films—dishonest guardians, chain gang captains, corrupt politicians, the boss of the turpentine camp, the brains of the bank robbers. Between 1925 and 1950 Philip Farnel was employed in an average of three pictures a year. He was sober, diligent, amiable, dependable, and he had many friends and no enemies; he knew the great and mingled with them without being one of them, and it did not at any time occur to him to snub or be snide to cameramen or stage-carpenters or wardrobe people or yes-men or writers or script-girls. The wheel turned, those who were low in '25, in '35 were often high (and vice versa). Secure in his many friendships and his own well-deployed if modest talents, Farnel was always in work. In 1950 the wheel made its last turn for him—the television was abroad in the land, the handwriting was on the wall, the doom of the B picture was sealed; in neither spectacles nor horror films was there a place for him.

He accepted the situation calmly and without railing. Farnel was frugal, though never niggardly. He had saved, he had invested, bought and sold. He continued, in his retirement, to do so. He now owned the old brown house on Cheromoya, which was subdivided into apartments; as well as the building occupied by the Chiropractic College and the premises of formerly Reverend Doctor Bernardson, the marriage counsellor. He collected stamps and coins and science fiction magazines and dealt commercially in all three as well, in a small but profitable way. He had thus enough money for his needs and pleasures and was in some hopes of obtaining more through the reruns of old films in which he had appeared and which were now on TV, although at too late an hour for Farnel to care to watch.

One beautiful June day when the smog had lifted and it was possible from the hills to see as far as Ingelwood or Culver City, Mr. Farnel, who had been shopping in the great supermarket on Hollywood Boulevard and was walking home (his one eccentricity), was hailed by a passing motorist whom he recognized with pleasure as Malcolm Morris, an old-time wardrobe man.

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"Wait there for me, Phil, will you?" Morris called. "I'll park and come back." Farnel replied that he would meet Morris in the coffee-shop nearby, and the latter nodded and drove off.

Over coffee and sweet rolls the two old acquaintances chatted for a while, discussing various friends, living and dead, and then their eyes met full on for a second. Morris dropped his gaze to the tabletop and began to draw circles out of a little puddle there. It always gave Farnel a small but definite pleasure to encounter in real life a cliche out of the movies, and so it was with a certain sober relish that he inquired, "What's on your mind, Mal?"

Mal gave a nervous laugh, hesitated, then said, awkwardly but doggedly, "Couple years ago, Phil, there was an incident in all the papers of a man turned up alive after everybody, including his whole family and the law enforcement agencies, they had all believed him dead. He was out fishing, this man was out fishing and the boat was found overturned and eventually they turned up this body which was identified as his and buried as his and then, after I forget how many years, he turned up alive in another state and he had run off with this woman who worked for him and they were living as man and wife under an assumed name. And the real body belonged to somebody else and had no connection with the incident. He had faked the overturned boat so he could run away with the other woman without anyone looking for him."

Farnel nodded slowly. "I remember it now. Yes. Didn't the insurance company try to get back the life insurance money they'd paid the legal wife at the time? How did it finally turn out?"

Morris shrugged. "No idea," he said. "I just mentioned it as an example. What I mean is, Phil, do you believe that a similar incident could of been staged here in Hollywood? I mean, it *is* . . . *possible,* isn't it?"

Philip Farnel considered the question as he sipped his coffee. "Whom did you have in mind?" he asked.

"Ohhh. . ." Morris hesitated, made some more circles, joined them to form figure-eights, pursed his mouth, and then dropped the dumb-show altogether by lifting his eyes to Farnel's and saying, rapidly and defiantly, "S. Maxwell Pierce."

"No," said Farnel, at once. "Absolutely not."

"You don't think so?" There was a disappointed, almost pleading tone in Morris's voice. Then, challengingly, he demanded, "Why not? Why is it so impossible? I could tell you—"

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Farnel cut in. "I don't care what you could tell me, Mal. I'll tell you why not. Sam Pierce didn't disappear on any fishing trip, he dropped dead in his home in Beverly Hills the day before Pearl Harbor. He was pronounced dead of a heart attack by his personal physician who had been attending him for his heart condition and for his ulcers, namely Dr. William Allen Albine, a man of the utmost integrity; that's why not."

Morris wasn't convinced. "He could of been bribed," he said.

"Dr. *Albine*? Are you out of your mind? You know better than that! Why, the man is incorruptable. Listen, Mal—*you* know, and *I* know, that a certain actress got down on her bended knees and offered him $10,000 to perform an illegal operation, and he refused, and she offered him fifteen and twenty and finally $25,000, because she trusted him and was afraid to trust anybody else—"

"—I know, I know—"

"—and he not only refused but he talked with her the whole night long and he talked her out of it and she had the baby, the delight of her life, and she blesses the name of Dr. Albine every day of her life. So—"

Morris said, "But that was a different situation." Farnel went on to point out that they had both attended the funeral services and had seen S. Maxwell Pierce laid out in his casket and that he, at least, Philip Farnel, had accompanied the body to its cremation. Morris's reply was, "It's possible it was a wax image or something. I don't *care*!" he concluded, with a defiant cry that was almost a shout.

Farnel threw up his hands. "The doctor was bribed, the coroner was bribed, the undertaker was bribed, a wax model was made— Mal! For Heaven's sake! What's put this extraordinary idea in your mind, the most ridiculous notion I've ever heard, a man of your age—"

Whereupon Malcolm Morris proceeded to tell him that on two successive days in the past week he, M.M., had seen S. Maxwell Pierce and that Pierce had spoken to him. What had he said was Farnel's utterly sceptical question. Morris, pale, half-ashamed, half-distraught, looked at him squarely, and quoted, in a flat and hollow voice, "*'Help. Help. Help. Help. Help.'*"

Much puzzled, and not a little troubled at his old acquaintance's extraordinary and stubborn delusion, Philip Farnel resumed his walk home. The day continued beautiful, all the more so for the ever-increasing rarity of such days in and around Los Angeles, and by the time he reached his residence the weight

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upon his mind was almost lifted. He prepared a roast of beef and put it in the oven, set the temperature low, and then went to his office in the rear of the apartment, intending to deal with the day's commercial correspondence, when, acting upon a sudden impulse, he got into his automobile and drove to Beverly Hills.

At the rear of a spacious estate in that city, attending to the fruit trees espaliered against the stone wall, was a small and wiry man in a faded plaid shirt, baggy trousers, and a filthy felt hat. Philip Farnel approached him. "Doc!" he called. Dr. William Allen Albine turned, squinted, beamed, and advanced to meet him. "Well, well, well—Phil Farnel!" he exclaimed, greeting him heartily. "This *is* a surprise. And a very pleasant one, I hasten to add." The two men shook hands and walked along, chatting of this and that, and took seats in the patio, where an Oriental manservant presently brought them drinks. They toasted one another's health, sipped, and then exchanged a silent look.

After a moment Dr. Albine spoke. "I'm glad you came, Phil," he said. "A great many of my old friends and patients do drop in to see me, from time to time, even though I'm retired, and of course I keep busy—as, I know, do you. But if I'd been asked to name one individual out of all whom I'd be most glad to see today, I'd have named *you,* Phil; I'd have named *you.* And you'll never guess why." He looked at his visitor; and, although Farnel smiled his gratitude at the compliment, nonetheless a shiver passed down his spine.

"You knew the individual whom I'm about to name, Phil," Dr. Albine continued. "And you were his friend, just as I had the privilege of being. To us he was more than a mere figure of glamor, although far be it from me to deny the immense value of what he did in bringing that glamor into many otherwise drab lives —the public. But I mustn't make a speech. Anyway, I know you will receive what I'm going to tell you, respectfully."

He took another swallow of his drink without removing his eyes from the face of his guest, then removed the glass from his lips. "One of the advantages of being retired is that a fellow can catch up on his reading. That's just what I was doing last night, at about ten P.M. I was sitting in my living room with a glass of milk and an apple, and I had some reading matter with me. The lamp was on behind my shoulder, and the rest of the room was in darkness. I had finished looking through Time Magazine and after that I started browsing a bit in the current number of the Journal of the A.M.A.—man

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named Harrow has been doing some remarkable research at Johns Hopkins into those non-specific microorganism which so often masquerade as—but I don't want to bore you, you're a layman. I must have dozed off, of *course* I dozed off, and I woke up with a start. But—you know how it is, I didn't at first realize that I was dreaming, I thought I was still awake . . ."

Dr. Albine told Mr. Farnel that he had looked up, in his dream, and saw S. Maxwell Pierce advancing slowly towards him with a perfectly silent tread.

"He had that gloomy expression upon his face which I'd seen there so often," the physician continued, sighing, and shaking his head regretfully. "And I was just going to say to him, 'Oh, come on, now, Sam, you old croaker, cheer up'—when suddenly it hit me: Great Scott! This man is dead! And at that moment he spoke to me."

Farnel said, "Don't tell me what he said, just tell me if I'm right. Okay, Doc?" The doctor, astonished, nodded his head. And Farnel repeated the words, *" 'Help. Help. Help. Help. Help,' "* imitating as he best could the flat and hollow sound.

The color ebbed from Dr. Albine's face, then slowly it returned. He licked his lips. "My G-d, Phil," he whispered. "How did you know?"

"Because. You're the second person today who's told me the same thing, or almost the same thing. Mal Morris—you remember Mal Morris? A real old-time wardrobe man, used to be with Famous Players, used to be with old Jake Fox, then for years and years he was with C-S—a heavy-set man with a ruddy face. One of the first people I got to know when I started work out here." And Farnel recapitulated the circumstances of his meeting with Malcolm Morris on Hollywood Boulevard. Doctor Albine listened, nodding slowly.

"Well, you know, Doc, some outfit has leased the old C-S Studio down on Santa Monica, it's been lying empty for years, and they have some sort of a deal whereby independent TV outfits can sublease parts of it to make their films, and part of the deal is that the people who took it over from C-S supply wardrobe. To the sub-leasers, I mean. Sub-*les*sors. Anyway, Mal Morris was bringing some items out of storage for the shooting—it was a jungle serial, and he had a bunch of old-time pith helmets and stuff like that. You probably wouldn't remember, but coming from storage along the south end is an L-shaped corridor and Mal says that he noticed as he went down that the lights were flickering in one arm of the L and when he turned the corner com-

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ing back they were almost out and that's where—he says—he saw Sam Pierce. Coming towards him. And saying just what I just said. And the next afternoon the same thing happened, only over by where the old dressing-rooms used to be. So tell me, Doc, what do you think it means?"

At first, all that Doctor Albine, who had been physician, friend, and counsellor to the great and near-great among the stars during the Golden Age of Hollywood, could do was shake his head. Then he muttered something to the effect of "extraordinary coincidence;" and then he sat silent for a space of time.

Philip Farnel broke the silence. "Doc," he asked, "what did Sam really die of?"

Albine's benign and wrinkled face turned savage behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. "I'll tell you what he died of" he said, almost snarling. "He died of over-work. Worn out—worn-out at thirty-nine! Isn't that a fine commentary on our so-called Modern Civilization? He died because because he was paying alimony to two ex-wives and the only way he could keep up with the payments was to borrow from his agent and the only way he could pay back his agent was to make one picture after another, as fast as he could, with no time out for rest or recreation or leisure or the finer things in life. No wonder he had a heart affliction. No wonder he had an ulcerated stomach. I tell you, Phil, in California a husband has no rights which an ex-wife is bound to respect, and in my opinion, it makes a mockery of our fine, old Anglo-Saxon legal system."

With these cutting words ringing in his ears, Philip Farnel reflected, not for the first time, upon the unhappy story of Doctor Albine's sole venture into matrimony; and he did not say a single word, but shook his head.

Farnel drove back home, pensively, and found that his married sister, Mrs. Edna Carter, had arrived in time to rescue the roast from the oven (where he had completely forgotten about it), and had made sandwiches from it for herself and teen-age daughter, Linda. "You'd forget your head, if it wasn't on your shoulders, Philly," was her greeting to him. He kissed the two women, mumbled an excuse, and sat down to eat, for—truth to tell—the untoward incidents of the day and the walks, as well as the ride through the clear air, had combined to give him an appetite perhaps somewhat keener than usual.

After a while he said, "Edna, you remember Sam Pierce, don't you?"

His sister threw back her head and lifted one hand. "Do I re-

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member!" she cried, rhetorically. "I will never forget him as long as I live! What a loss! What a tragedy! What a handsome man! One of the greatest actors of our day and age."

"Oh, come on, Mother," said Linda, in a scornful tone. "S. Maxwell Pierce was a *ham*—and you know it. He wasn't even an *honest* ham, like Uncle Philly."

Mrs. Carter said, "You shut your mouth," and glared venomously at her child. "Just because he doesn't talk with his mouth closed and scratch himself—"

P. Farnel swallowed some roast beef. "Why do you call him a ham, honey?" he enquired. "Have you seen any of his pictures in recent years?"

Linda said that she had. *The Dark Of The Moon* was on the Late, Late Show. "What a bomb," she said. "Not just because he's Pre-Method, as Mommy seems to think I mean. I mean, some of those real old-timey actors, like Frank Sinatra, are a gas. But—S. Maxwell Pierce? Phooey." Strictly from Hamsville."

It had been many years since Farnel had laid eyes on Roger Sherman and he was far from sure that the latter would consent to see him. The ease with which the appointment was made, and the fact that it was set for the following morning, surprised him. Even more of a surprise, and a sad one, was the inactivity he saw on all sides as he entered the offices of Cahan-Sherman Productions in the so-called New Studio in Culver City. He remembered when both the newer and the older C-S studios were hives of industry, and although he had accepted that things were not with the silver screen as they once were, still, it was a surprise.

The second surprise was what the passing years had done to Rog Sherman. The Young Lion of Hollywood, he had been called, once upon a time. The account of how he had wrested control of the studio from Sam Cahan in the days when the latter was still holding back cautiously from total conversion to sound, flying his private biplane across the country and interviewing Mrs. Yetta Meredith—widow of Isidore Meredith, co-founder of the studio—and then immediately flying his biplane back again with her proxy in his pocket: this is the stuff from which legend is made.

But time had wrought many changes in the one-time Young Lion of Hollywood, and he now looked like a very old lion indeed, with hollowed eyes, hollowed cheeks, hollowed throat, and his once leonine mane more scanty than otherwise. Little as Philip Farnel was prepared for this, even less was he prepared for the expression on Roger Sher-

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man's face. The head of Cahan-Sherman Productions glared at him, baleful, menacing, and hostile. Farnel felt taken aback.

"I'm waiting," said the movie magnate. "I. Am. Waiting."

Realizing that the man's time was valuable and not to be lightly wasted, Farnel plunged right into his narrative. "It's about S. Maxwell Pierce, C.S.," he said.

"I'll bet it is," said Mr. Sherman. "I'll just bet it is." Then a flood of scarlet washed across his face and he all but lunged from his desk, pointing his finger and shaking his hand at the astonished visitor. "Well, let me tell you that you won't get away with it!" he shouted. "I promise you and your rotten friends that!" And then he sank back into his capacious chair and fumbled a capsule, a pill, and two tablets into his mouth, and reached with a trembling grasp for the carafe of water.

Without even recovering from his astonishment, Farnel pushed the jug within reach, and waited until the medicine had been swallowed. Then he said, "C.S., I do not understand."

"You understand, you understand all right," the tycoon mumbled. A few drops of water glistened on his chin, and he wiped them off on one of the famous linen handkerchiefs with the monograms woven into them especially for him at a factory in Northern Ireland. "Don't tell me you don't understand. What, you aren't in cahoots with them—the whole rotten bunch of them? Darnley Mackenzie, Emile Ungar, Richard Rowe, Stella Smith, Sir Q. Fenton Stock, and all the others? I suppose it's just the powers of my imagination, I merely fancied I saw your name on the letter sent to me by that terrible shyster, Leonardo Del Bello? Ha!"

A faint glimmering of light came to Philip Farnel as he recognized the names of other players more famous in past days than at present. "Please, C.S.," he pleaded. "Don't excite yourself. Why do you take it so personally? It's true, certainly, that I and others have engaged Mr. Del Bello to represent us in discussions—"

"'Discussions,'" sneered Mr. Sherman. "On the surface, discusion; yes. And behind my back, what? Extortion! That's what it is and you won't get away with it, and when I find out how you're doing it, believe me, my good man, you and all your fine friends will rot in the common jail. The William J. Burns Agency is on the track of your tricks right now, and so soon as they obtain conclusive evidence—the police! That's what. You forget with whom you have to contend. I wouldn't put up with it when the motion picture business was good and I certainly have no in-

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tention of submitting to it without a wink or a blink when the motion picture business is no business at all unless a man of my standing is prepared to become a mere hired lackey or errand boy for the Chase Manhattan Bank, the millions and billions of dollars which the so-called 'stars' they have nowadays are demanding before they'll consent or condescend to shoot a single frame, and then what happens? All the evil diseases of Egypt, from a hangover to a miscarriage, meanwhile the money is eaten up, while these temperamental cuties sulk in their tents like Alcibiades and watch television. Twentieth-Century, why *they* deserve such fortune and me not, I couldn't tell you, they strike oil on their lot, and part of the property goes for a high-class housing development. But does C-S strike oil? Do *you* strike oil? That's how C-S strikes oil, and who, may I ask, would be crazy enough to start or even to consider a high-class housing development in Culver City? No one. Meanwhile, the costs continue and the debts mount up and the little shtickle income from renting the old studio on Santa Monica wouldn't begin to cover it. So what happens? I rent a few of the old films to television as a experiment and a desperation, they catch on, an offer is made to me by N.B.S. for all the old films in our vaults, an adequate sum of money for the years of service and aggrevation which I've given to The Industry, and it would enable me to settle with my creditors for one hundred cents on the dollar and end my career honorably and have a little peace and pleasure in the few years left to me by Our Father in Heaven, so then what happens?"

Barely pausing for breath and a fresh sip of water, the head of Cahan-Sherman continued, "I'll tell you what happens, as if you didn't know, you snake-in-the-grass. What happens. Every surviving motion picture performer who ever played a bit part in a C-S production hires that Leonardo Del Bello, a money-hungry conniver from the word Go, in the hopes that they'll be able to gouge from me a share in the moneys for the television sales and even the few rentals to the same medium. You know what this means, Mr. Philip Farnel, do you?"

Farnel lowered his eyes from a photo-portrait of the late S. Maxwell Pierce which, among those of other stars both male and female, adorned the walls of Mr. Sherman's still-lavish office.

"Why, Mr. Sherman," he said, mildly; "it seems to me that all it means is that all of those who helped create a picture will be able to share in the profits. We were paid, true, don't get me

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wrong, I'm not complaining that we weren't paid well enough. Maybe some of us were really paid too much. But we were paid for moving pictures intended to be shown in moving picture theaters. Television opens up an entirely—"

A dangerous calm descended on the Lion of Hollywood. A faint smile began its tracings on his distinguished face. "My friend," he said, softly, "let me explain to you. You are proposing to open the dike in order to irrigate certain fields of land. You think the water will flow here, it will flow there, it will flow exactly where you want, and it can be arranged just that way. No. No, my friend. Not so. A flood is a flood. If the actors obtain a share of the proceeds from television sales and rentals, then everybody will obtain a share. The producer." He began to count on his fingers. "The director. The assistants. The cameraman. The music arranger. The costumier. The carpenter. The electrician, the wardrobe man, the make-up man, the script-girl, the salad-cook in the commisary, the guard at the gate. Everybody. Literally, ev-er-y-bod-y. So with everybody obtaining a share, what is left? *Bubkis,* that's what's left. Goat-droppings, I'm sorry you oblige me to use such a coarse expression. And C-S Productions dissolves into bankruptcy. So you can understand my position. But what," and here he began to shout again, "about *your* position? Sabotage! Espionage! Extortion! Terrorist tactics! And you have the gall to come here and tell me that you're here about S. Maxwell Pierce, yet? Shame! Shame! Ghoul! Vampire! To use the form and the voice of your old friend, you're not ashamed?

"I'd just like to know how you did it! *Why* you did it, that's obvious—to blackmail me and to squeeze your rotten ransom money from our depleted coffers, it's obvious. One single picture we've got in production and it hasn't cost me enough heart-ache, that bitch, Myffanwydd Evans, no—two million dollars, a modest little sum at today's prices—*She Stoops To Conquer,* in modern dress—as if you didn't know, you terrible person—" The mogul's phrases came rapidly, abruptly, his chest heaved. "—and into at least half the scenes we've shot—you and your rotten crew—ruined! ruined!—right over the scenes, like double exposure, that fink you hired to masquerade as S. Maxwell Pierce—comes walking, comes walking—and his voice all over the sound-track—*'Help!–Help! Help! Help! Help!'*—"

This time it was Philip Farnel's turn to reach, with trembling fingers, for the carafe of water.

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It was Louella Parson's column (confused beyond correction, but mentioning both Pierce and Farnel and spelling their names properly) that brought Doody Michaeljohn to the old brown house on Cheromoya. She sat in the livingroom of his apartment, sun-tanned, healthy, and ill at ease.

"I suppose it's only natural that you were interested," he said, also a bit nervous. "Considering that you and Sam were such good friends—"

"He'd been keeping me for years, as well you know, bless you, Phil," she said. "'Good friends,' yes, I guess we were. He would've married me, too, if it hadn't been for Irma and Dorothy . . . At least that's what he always said, anyway. I don't know. I just don't know. I never did. However—" Her voice lost its uncertain note and became brisk.

"This happened over a month ago . . ." She rummaged in her purse, brought out a piece of paper, unfolded it. ". . . but I didn't understand it at the time. Mrs. Mobery told me at the time —"

"Mrs. who?" Philip Farnel squinted, leaned closer. The burden of the entire affair was now weighing down on him; he would very much have liked to be able to get back to his Burmese airmails, his rixdollars, his complete collection of Gernsback *Amazing*, his business block in Chatsworth, and the other familiar items which had occupied his time before all this. "Mrs. *who*?"

"Mrs. Phyllis Mobery. She's a very well-known Sensitive, Phil, I got to know her at the Spiritual Science Church on Cahuenga Boulevard, in connection with our Friday Night Dutch Suppers, and Phil—I want to tell you—she is marvelous! Simply marvelous! There isn't a thing to which she can't turn her hand, what she's done for the bedridden and the shut-ins, she can sing, she can paint, she has a pilot's licence and a black belt, and her work with handwriting has attracted world-wide attention."

Farnel felt himself utterly lost. All he could say was, "Go on."

"It was over a month ago, there were only the three of us, Mrs. Mobery, Laura Bender, and me, and it was at my place, Phil, you were never there, I had to give up the bungalow, Phil, it had too many memories. I live in a court in Boyle Heights now. Well, it was about eight o'clock, and suddenly it seemed to've gotten very quiet and I looked at Laura and she looked at me and then we both looked at Mrs. Mobery and we saw right away that she had slipped into Trance. So I very quickly put a pad of paper and two pencils right by her hands, the soft-lead Eberhard Faber

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Mongol 480, the kind she prefers, you know . . ."

Curious soft noises began to escape from the parted lips of the Sensitive, but her hearers, knowing that they would never develop into coherent speech, wasted no efforts listening to them, but watched her hands, instead—old hands, strong hands, capable with mahl-stick and brush, capable with the organ and the judo-hold, airplane controls and pots and pans—and now, submitting to things utterly removed from any of those others, hands grasping pad and pencils, hands . . . writing.

Farnel took the sheet of yellow paper handed to him, put on his glasses and began to read—or to try to read. He looked up. "Doody, are you trying to tell me that one person wrote all this?"

"Do you think I'd lie to you, Phil? Laura and I *saw* it. Of course, you have to understand that she was just the medium wherebye those who have passed beyond communicated with us . . . Go, on, Phil—"

"No, I—well, just let me read this . . ." His voice died away.

In a clear Spencerian hand at the top of the page someone had written, *Mother Mother Mother Dearest Mothe*—and had broken off abruptly without even a trace of the final *r*. Immediately succeeding this an entirely different handwriting began—small, cramped, bearing down heavily, quite incomprehensible: Farnel, looking at it in dismay, was not even sure that it was English. He was certain only that it was very ugly and that, whatever it meant, it did not mean well. It vanished in a swirl of lines, as if there had been a struggle to seize the pencil. After that was a space of about an inch, followed by an address vigorously written—*Mrs H M Stevenson 1327 Franklin Street Reissborough P.A.*—and the words, *Hi, Pipsqueek. "Hank and Bucky."* The bottom of the sheet was subscribed in a large, uneven and faltering script, *our Fideral Unon it mus an will be preasarved.* And over this, on the slant, was something else which Farnel could not make out.

He looked up, met her eager glance, shook his head. "Means nothing to me," he said. "I'm sorry."

Doodie Michaeljohn gave a wordless exclamation, tapped her finger excitedly on the yellow sheet, then clapped her hand to her forehead. "Oh, of course! Phil! Take it—hold it upside down—and hold it up to a mirror. That one over there. Go *on,* Phil!"

Farnel obeyed. He saw reflected his own face, those irregular and ugly features which had been his misfortune as a boy and his fortune as a man. Many thoughts went rapidly through his mind,

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but he forced his glance down to the reflection of the paper. All the writing was reversed and incomprehensible, and then part of it jumped suddenly into almost-clarity. He tilted the paper until the slanting words were straight, then jumped, startled, his breath hissing. The woman came up behind him. "There," she said. "Now do you see?"

"Yes," he said. "I can see it now."

Doodie help help Doodie help help stop then or no peace for me darling D flix no Ive got to faed-out hel

His quick and frightened respiration was the only sound for a second or two. Then Doodie said, "We called up, you know, that Mrs. Stevenson? And she said everybody else used to call her husband 'Henry' and she was the only one who called him 'Hank', and 'Bucky' was the name they had for their little child before it was born, only it didn't live, and she started to cry—"

"Doodie—"

"—but she managed to tell us that his nick-name for *her* was *'Pip-'*—"

"Doodie—" That the Veil of Oblivion should be lifted to no better end than the exchange of domestic trivia or the proclamation of obsolete political slogans seemed suddenly intolerable to Farnel. "Doodie, this is Sam's *hand*writing!"

She seemed surprised at his surprise. Very quickly, she said, "Yes, of course it is, Phil. And I've finally figured out what it means, don't you see, Phil? I've figured out what it *means*. He wouldn't Appear to *me,* Phil, he wouldn't want to even faintly take a chance of frightening me, so this is what he did, you see." She chuckled, faintly, fondly. "He never was much of a speller. 'F-a-e-d-o-u-t' That's one mistake he always used to make. And he was probably in a hurry this time, too, because who knows how much time he had. If there's any such thing as Time as we know it, There . . . Don't you see, Phil, Sam wasn't just a player, a mere mummer, Sam was an artist, Sam was an *actor*. He had oh such a tremendous talent, and he didn't use it in the movies, he *could*-n't use it in the movies. He was type-cast and he couldn't escape and he needed money, he always needed money, Irma and Dorothy and their alimony, and so he let the studio push him into one piece of tripe after another and that's the reason—"

She stopped abruptly. Looking away from Farnel, she said in a lower tone, "That's not the reason. It's not the whole reason. He loved the rich living and the big house he lived in and the big houses he visited in and the big cars he drove. He loved the fine, fancy clothes he was always buy-

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ing and he loved the stupid crowds at the stupid premieres—every few months, another premiere for him because every few months there was another picture."

Philip Farnel looked at a photograph in a gold frame, showing the beautiful features of S. Maxwell Pierce. The star's arm was around Farnel's shoulders and the latter was looking at him with an affectionate smile which made his face even more than usually ugly, devoid as it was of even the minor dignity of villainy. "He was always talking of going on the stage," Farnel recalled. " 'I'm going to throw it all up, Phil,' he used to say. 'When this contract is up I'm going to tell the Studio where to go, and then it's New York for me. I don't care what parts I have to take at first or how hard I've got to work. Sooner or later Broadway will give me the kind of part I want, and then, Phil, I'll be the happiest man alive.' "

Doodie Michaeljohn nodded. S. Maxwell Pierce had told her the same things, too; told them to her often—and often with tears. But he had never made the move, had never been able to bring himself to make the sacrifice, do the hard work required. Not that the screen was a snap, no. Sometimes he had to be up at five in the morning after only a few hours sleep, to be on the set at seven. But once on the set, what did he have to do? Nothing. He just had to stroll through his lines, show his dimples, flash his teeth, take the girl in his arms, and that was it.

"It was easier for you, Phil," Doodie said. "Actors like you and Quentin Stock and Emile Ungar and lots of others. You looked on it as a job. You were round pegs and you fitted comfortably into round holes. But with Sam it was *different.* He knew that he was prostituting himself and he hated it but he went right on *do*ing it. He used to talk about 'that one talent which is death to hide—' "

Farnel nodded. "I know . . . He used to call it 'the real Sin against the Holy Ghost . . .' "

And then Pierce had died, worn-out at thirty-nine, but at least—Doodie said—at least he was at peace, at rest. "Until they took his old pictures out of the vaults and dusted them off and began showing them on TV. Because, you know, after he died, his popularity faded awfully fast. The pictures dated so quickly, the War and all, and there were newer and younger handsome men to take his place, and the exhibitors just stopped booking his pictures and the distributors didn't even push them. But by now, you see, Phil, they're so old that they're *quaint*—isn't that a terrible thing, Phil? Isn't that *ter*rible? People look at those bits

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and pieces of Sam Pierce's heart and body and soul, that he killed himself making, and they smirk and titter and yawn and reach for another can of beer, because it's only midnight and they aren't sleepy enough to go to bed. It's just killing *time* to them, Phil. And it's just making money, for the studio. But do you know what it is to *Sam,* Phil? Why, you only have to read this desperate plea of his for help, Phil. Each time I read it, it's an arrow in my heart. *Doodie help help stop then*—that should be 'stop them,' of course—stop the people who're showing his old films. *Flix no*—that's what he used to call the movies, the flics, flickers, you know, English slang, I don't know where he picked it up. Oh, Phil!"

She began to cry and he awkwardly put his arms around her and patted her. "That's what it means. That's why he's haunting people and the studios. It's why his face and his voice keep coming onto the prints and the soundtracks of whatever it is they're making there, and why he shows up and appeals to all these people, Phil. Because . . . Phil . . . *as long as his old films keep on being shown, his soul won't be able to rest in peace . . .*"

The matter was settled, for the time being, at least, without too much difficulty. Roger Sherman, balancing television rentals for *Dark Of The Moon* (starring S. Maxwell Pierce) against the losses being sustained in the making of *She Stoops To Conquer* (starring Myffanwydd Evans), was persuaded to make the experiment. *Dark Of The Moon* was retired to the vaults once more, and, with that, the ghost of S. Maxwell Pierce walked no more.

How long it will last, of course, no one knows. After all, Pierce starred in close to thirty pictures, and appeared in many others made before he reached starhood. Sherman will not remain active in movie-making forever; and when he retires, the complete stock of C-S films passes out of his hands. Only his continuance for the present, plus the law-suit (for it finally came to that) filed by the surviving old movie stars for a share in the TV rights to the films they played in—only these two things continue to keep S. Maxwell Pierce off the video screen.

Philip Farnel awaits the future with patience, resignation, optimism, and—in this particular instance—no small measure of sadness.

He had held S. Maxwell Pierce to be his close and beloved friend. He had, silently, silently, silently, and very deeply, too—envied S. Maxwell Pierce every atom of personal beauty and personal charm which

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Pierce had possessed and he, Farnel, had not. He had suffered in the great star's death, and this wound, which time had eventually healed, had been opened again. It had been opened afresh—or was this yet another wound?—and it still pained, and still it bled. For Pierce's shade, drawn from the Valley of Death, had sought out friends, had sought out enemies, had sought out casual acquaintances, and even strangers.

But it seemed to have forgotten, utterly forgotten, that it had ever known Philip Farnel.

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There are writers who won't go the encyclopedia, let alone around the corner, to check a fact: out upon the knaves. Al-Sheikh *L. Sprague de Camp, as all the world knows, goes half-way around the world to check* his *facts (DRAGON HUNT, F & SF, Jan. 1963). But suppose the "facts" are concerned with a world unknown and hence unknowable?—an imaginary world? Is the writer free to make up* everything? *Not so, says the* Sheikh. *Certain situations are inescapable, and certain facts evolve logically therefrom. His article on terrestrial and extra-terrestrial ecology, particularly in regard to animal life, will be of interest to all readers—as well as writers (hint, hint)—of Science Fiction.*

HOW TO PLAN A FAUNA

by L. Sprague de Camp

"WHEN YOU GET YOUR BREATH, Richard," said Professor Glomp, "you might tell me why you want to drag me into that infernal machine of yours."

The bearded savant had wrapped himself around a table leg, the better to resist the efforts of Richard Farnsworth, interplanetary explorer extraordinary, to drag him out of his laboratory and into the three-place space cruiser on the lawn. When Farnsworth saw that even his mighty thews failed to budge the scientist, he gasped:

"They've — kidnapped — Miss Discounte!"

"The daughter of that interplanetary banker? The one who calls everybody 'dahling'? Congrat—Who did?"

"The Wonger Ping! That sinister secret society that—"

"Yes, I know about them. I suppose you want me to help rescue her. Where did they take her?"

"I don't know exactly, except that it's somewhere in the forty-third super-galaxy."

"Then how—"

Farnsworth cracked a feeble grin. "For once I got you the dinkum oil. I wasn't in time to stop their ship, but I caught one of the ground crew and—ah—persuaded him to describe their

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base planet. He didn't know its name, but he'd been there, and he gave me enough details for you to identify the planet."

"Well?"

"Its gravity, temperature, and atmosphere are the same as ours, but its surface is all bare and rocky, without vegetation. The only form of life is a huge carnivore called the waufl, something like a saber-toothed tiger with bat's wings, octopus tentacles, and lobster claws as well as its regular paws and fangs. Oh, yes, it also has a sting on the end of its tail . . ."

"Wait," interrupted Glomp. "Did you say it's the only form of life?"

"My informant was positive. The Wonger Ping have explored the whole planet—"

"What does the waufl eat?"

"Wonger Pingers, when it can."

"How about the rest of the time?"

"It's cannibalistic. They eat each other."

Glomp sighed. "You've been led down the garden path again, Richard. The ecological *Gestalt* is impossible, like the famous cat-and-rat farm. There soon would be no waufls—"

"Don't say 'impossible,' Professor. It's not scientific."

"Don't tell me what's scientific! It's not impossible, in your sense, that you'll grow wings and a scorpion sting yourself. But until I see it—Here, we're wasting time. Show me this prisoner."

"I let him go."

"What?"

"Sure. I figured I'd gotten all the information I could, and he promised to reform—"

"Why you—you—"

Farnsworth had never heard of ecology. This may be defined as biological economics; or, if you prefer, economics may be defined as human ecology. A workable biota (= fauna + flora) must be made up of parts that furnish each other with means of living. A fauna composed entirely of carnivores would be like a manufacturing company consisting entirely of managers, with no workmen, clerks, or salesmen.

As a matter of fact, Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars approaches this state. To judge from the stories, the only wild life found over vast areas of Mars is the banth, a ten-legged Martian lion. There is no sign of the thundering herds of herbivores needed to support a population of banths, who could not live on the mere snack provided by an occasional Deja Thoris.

In planning faunas of far-flung planets, an author should know a little ecology, just as his imagined future civilization should have a workable economy. We can get an idea of what con-

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stitutes a workable ecology, at least on a planet like ours, by looking at those that have actually worked.

The parts of extraterrestrial biotas that most concern heroes of science fiction are the larger land animals. Some people suppose that the richest faunal environments on Earth are, on land, the tropical rain forest and in the water, the tropical oceans. Both suppositions are wrong.

The most teeming aquatic faunas are in the polar oceans. All animal ocean life depends on single-celled plants, the algae, save for narrow strips along the shores where some water animals browse on seaweeds. The algae in turn depend on the carbon dioxide in the water. The cooler the water, the more carbon dioxide it can hold in solution.

The richest land faunas are found in the sub-tropical savannas and the temperate prairies. These are lands with a rainfall of 10 to 30 inches a year. This is enough to support a rich crop of grass and perhaps occasional stands of trees.

Below 10 inches of rain, the vegetation is too sparse for rich animal life. Above 30 inches, the forest shuts off the sun and keeps down the growth of grass and other low-growing plants on which large herbivores live. Above 50 inches we get the rain forest, wherein the plants grow too thickly for animals, save for climbing and flying types.

Every animal is a member of a food chain. The simplest kind of food chain has two members: say, the elephant and the plants it eats. The plants in turn live on air, sunshine, and mineral salts. Since men destroy all forms of plant and animal life indiscriminately, we will leave them out of consideration.

On the other hand, a Brazilian plant may be eaten by ants, who are eaten by an anteater, who is eaten by a jaguar. Here we have a four-link food chain.

On land we find animals and plants living in an ecology of many short chains, like plant-elephant or plant-ant-anteater-jaguar. In the ocean, on the other hand, food chains form much longer series. In a typical food chain, an alga is eaten by a copepod (a small crustacean), which is eaten by a mullet, which is eaten by a weakfish, which is eaten by a sand shark, which is eaten by a tiger shark.

Moreover, the ocean chain has many other branches and interconnections. The tiger shark is glad to snap up a weakfish or any of many other fish. Many other fishes eat the mullet, who in turn eats many small crustaceans. If you diagram the ecology of a piece of ocean, you get a spider-web of lines connecting the eaters and the eaten.

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The distinctive thing about an oceanic fauna is that (with the trivial exception noted) every oceanic animal above pinhead size is a carnivore. The reason is that the larger sea animals are too large to "graze" on the sea's soup of one-celled plants. On land, where plants grow larger than any animals, ecological conditions are different.

We can imagine a planet on which the land plant life was all single-celled, as it is in the oceans on Earth. It would form a thin, lichenlike coating over otherwise bare rocks. In such a case, land-animal life, like sea-animal life on earth, would consist of a tier of tiny herbivores, no bigger than small insects, preyed upon by successive tiers of carnivores of increasing size.

As things are on earth, land herbivores come in all sizes because the plants on which they live come in all sizes, too. While many herbivores, like the elephant, can eat a variety of plants, many others specialize on one particular kind. Thus koalas eat nothing but eucalyptus leaves.

Furthermore, as herbivores have developed different sizes and shapes, carnivores have also specialized in eating herbivores and other carnivores of certain kinds. Among carnivores, the favorite food is generally somewhat smaller than the eater, but not too much smaller. No weasel in his right mind would attack a buffalo, and it would be a waste of time for a tiger to try to live on mice. So long as the tiger sticks to buffalo and the weasel to mice, they get along.

There are exceptions to this rule. Wolves and wild dogs, running in packs, kill herbivores larger than themselves. Extreme differences in size between predator and prey occur in the baleen whale, with its internal mustache for straining tons of small fish and crustaceans out of sea water, the anteater with its tongue, and army ants that swarm over and kill small mammals and reptiles. But, on the whole, a carnivore's prey is usually of the same order of size as the carnivore.

In fact, we can line up the herbivores and carnivores of a fauna according to size, in a kind of a ladder of eaters and eaten. If we do this with the animals of modern Wyoming, we might list:

Carnivores	*Herbivores*
Grizzly bear	Bison
Puma	Wapiti
Wolf	Mule deer
Coyote	Prongbuck
Bobcat	Jack rabbit
Ferret	Prairie dog
Shrew	Misc. insects

This list has several flaws, because nature is seldom so tidy as the list implies. For one thing, the grizzly is not really a bison-eater.

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It is an omnivore. That is, it eats almost anything on the menu that is not like (grass and leaves) too hard to digest. The crow and the cockroach are other omnivores. Once in a while a grizzly kills a deer. But I have never heard of its attacking the bison, who, as far as the healthy adult is concerned is practically without natural enemies.

Furthermore, we could add many more mammals to this list: black bear, moose, mountain sheep, fox, and a host of rodents (beaver, muskrat, red squirrel, ground squirrels, mice, marmots, and so on), not to mention all the birds, reptiles, insects, and other non-mammals, on down to protozoans and viruses. All these organisms fit into the ecological web. But I oversimplify to make my point plain. This is that, in a real Terran land fauna, the herbivores come in various sizes, adapted to various foodstuffs and ways of getting them. The carnivores, which prey upon them, also come in the sizes most suitable for living on herbivores of various kinds.

Notice that no two of the animals on my list competes directly with any other. Even when they eat the same food, they tend to eat it at different times and places. Thus both the puma and the wolf eat deer; but the puma hunts in hills and forests, while the wolf prefers to hunt on open plains.

On the rare occasions that we do find two species competing directly, one is usually on its way out. Thus the thylacine (the marsupial wolf) died out in Australia when men introduced the dingo; a few thylacines may survive in Tasmania. A species evolves, not so as to take over a niche in the ecology already occupied by another well-adapted species, but to fill a niche that has not yet been occupied. That is what paleontologists mean when they speak of the *opportunism* of evolution. Having so evolved, a species may spread into a neighboring territory where it does directly compete with another, and one or the other goes under. Moreover, when a new species enters an area, by its very presence it provides a new niche in the environment for the parasites and predators that can prey upon it.

The most striking thing about any real biota is not the animals themselves, be they as huge as the blue whale, as swift as the duck hawk, or as unbeautiful as the wart hog. It is the way the biota fits together as a living whole. The flow of living matter from plant to herbivore to carnivore and back to plant matter again is delicately balanced, so that any drastic change in one part brings about changes elsewhere. Thus an increase in Arctic hares brings an increase in the foxes, lynxes, and owls that live on the hares.

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The greatest disturber of the natural balance is man. Most of the Earth's larger animal life has been destroyed in the last few centuries, directly by hunting and indirectly by taking away its land for human purposes. By cutting down the trees and letting goats eat the seedlings as fast as they come up, men have turned most of the region around the Mediterranean Sea from parkland to desert. Annoyed at some predator because it steals their chickens, men kill it off, only to find that the mice and other rodents it ate, multiplying without a natural check, are a far worse pest than the predator ever was.

Even well-meant efforts to improve an environment often have disastrous results. For instance, before 1907 a herd of 4,000 deer lived on the Kaibab Plateau in Arizona. Pumas, wolves, and coyotes kept the numbers of the deer in check. Men, either foolishly judging animals by human moral standards or not wanting any competition in the business of killing for sadistic fun, decided to help the deer by destroying their "enemies." So they killed off the predators.

Sure enough, the deer increased to 100,000 by 1924. But then the deer destroyed their sources of food by overcropping. In two years, more than half the deer starved to death. Ever since, the deer have been declining by starvation while the range has continued to deteriorate, so that it can now support fewer deer than it could before 1907.

If we look at the whole Wyoming fauna, we also see that, among the herbivores, different species rely on different ways of keeping one jump ahead of their enemies. Sometimes, like the bison, they depend on sheer size and strength, or on an armament of horns and hooves. Sometimes, like the deer and prongbuck, they can run fast. Sometimes, like the porcupine, they wear armor. Sometimes, like the beaver and the muskrat, they are amphibious, living in or near water to which they can flee. Sometimes like the red squirrel they climb trees; sometimes like the birds and bats they fly; sometimes like the gopher and prairie dog they burrow.

Likewise, the carnivores of the biota have also developed various habits of life to correspond with those of the herbivores. Thus we have the pouncing puma, the running wolf, the climbing marten, the burrowing badger, and the swimming mink.

Now, when we list the animals of any other biota, we find that the general array of species falls into much the same ecological niches as we have in Wyoming—with due allowance for differences of climate, vegetation, and geological era. A kangaroo is not much

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like a prongbuck. But in Australia it plays much the same role: that of a medium-sized, gregarious vegetarian, depending on its speed for safety. Australia also has burrowing, tree-climbing, and gliding marsupials to correspond to our own gophers, squirrels, and flying squirrels.

Australia has on the whole a poorer fauna than Wyoming. But East Africa has a much richer one, with a tremendous assortment of herbivores, from the elephant down to mice, and oddities like the giant amphibious hippopotamus and the burrowing, ant-eating aard-vark. Back in the Pleistocene period, when mammalian evolution reached its climax, all the continents except Antarctica—even Australia—had mammalian faunas comparable in size and variety to that of Africa today. Or, to be more exact, to the African game preserves, for most of Africa outside the preserves is hardly wilder than Iowa.

If we go back to earlier geological periods, we find the faunas still breaking down into similar assortments of animals, like the same tune played on different instruments. In the Jurassic and Cretaceous there were carnivorous dinosaurs in graded sizes, preying upon an assortment of herbivorous dinosaurs, which relied upon size, horns, speed, armor, or swimming ability to protect themselves.

Miocene South America displayed a curious assortment of land animals. All the large herbivores were placental mammals, like us. They looked something like the camels, tapirs, horses, rhinoceroses, and rabbits of the northern continents, albeit they had evolved separately while South America was cut off from the rest of the world, by the process of convergent evolution. There were also creatures that looked like nothing else on earth, such as the ground sloths and the glyptodmalian tortoises. The carnivores, however, were either marsupials, from a saber-toothed lionlike beast down through wolflike, catlike, and weasel-like forms; or giant flightless birds with eagle's beaks, also in graded sizes up to that of an ostrich.

The niches into which animals have fitted themselves have naturally affected their bodily forms. The largest herbivores, depending on their size for protection, are called "graviportal"; that is, weight-carrying. To bear their mass, their legs are thick and pillarlike. Today we see such legs in elephants and rhinoceroses. In the early Oligocene, the titanotheres and baluchitheres were the leading graviportals. In the Cretacious, the graviportals were the horned dinosaurs and a few surviving sauropod dinosaurs.

Herbivores that run away from danger are classed as "cursorial"

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and have a slender, long-legged build. Either graviportals or cursorials may be armed with horns, tusks, or the spiked tails of the glyptodont *Doedicurus* and the armored dinosaur *Stegosaurus*. Other shapes include the fossorial (burrowing), arboreal (climbing), armored, amphibious, and flying. Climbing, burrowing, and flying animals are always fairly small, for engineering reasons. Can you imagine an elephant's climbing a tree?

Amphibious types have special adaptations, such as closable nostrils, eyes and nostrils on the top of their heads (one extinct hippopotamus had its eyes on stalks!) and the ability to hold one's breath for several minutes at least.

So, if you wish to plan a fauna for Planet X, this fauna should have a general form like that of these known faunas. It should have many different species of herbivores, of different sizes, provided with various means of defense or escape. It should also have a smaller number of species of carnivores, in graded sizes for preying most effectively on the herbivore without directly competing with one another.

Although a hungry carnivore will sometimes attack another, smaller carnivore—the lion has been known to kill the leopard, and the leopard the serval—most carnivores avoid prey that can fight back effectively. With them, hunting is strictly business. They want a good meal at the cost of the fewest possible scratches and bites.

Fictional descriptions of imaginary faunas are often wrong in the way they distribute the different kinds of wild life. They give the impression that the fauna consists mainly of large, fierce, dangerous animals, created for the special purpose of enabling the hero to show his mettle.

But, in a real fauna, the smaller animals far outnumber the larger, and the smaller they are the more numerous they are. You may not see the swarms of smaller creatures, but they are there. What looks like an empty stretch of prairie teems with small rodents —mice, gophers, rabbits, prairie dogs, ground squirrels—not to mention reptiles, insects, and other non-mammals. They are hidden in the grass or holed up for the day watching, whether in Wyoming or Uganda, it is a rule of thumb that, for every animal you see, a score of others are watching you.

Also, the herbivores far outnumber the carnivores. It takes about ten pounds of plant food to grow one pound of herbivore. The other nine pounds are used up in moving around and carrying on the animal's life processes. Likewise, it takes about ten pounds of herbivore to grow one pound of carnivore.

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While herbivores have developed a variety of horns, tusks, and sharpened hooves as weapons, carnivores content themselves with claws and teeth. Horns would be of little use to a carnivore and so are not developed.

Neither do we find the massive graviportal build among carnivores. Such a predator would not be agile enough to catch its prey, while its size would require a voracious diet. The largest theropod dinosaurs, *Saurophagus* and *Tyrannosaurus,* came pretty close to the graviportal build. It had, however, been suspected that they were carrion-eaters as much as active predators. Perhaps they made their livings as do some eagles: by robbing smaller predators of their catches. Their size would enable them to muscle in on the feasts of smaller theropods, who had slain the prey that the lumbering monsters could not catch for themselves. The same might be true of the carnivorous mammal *Andrewsarchus* from the Mongolian Eocene, with a yard-long skull.

We must also remember that the environment limits the number of niches into which different species can fit. Thus we do not find tree-climbing or water-loving animals in the midst of a treeless and waterless desert. Large amphibious animals, like the hippopotamus and the crocodile, do not usually range into countries where fresh-water lakes freeze over solidly in winter—although the eastern United States did have a bear-sized beaver during the Pleistocene.

Suppose Richard Farnsworth finds a planet with a plausible fauna. How would the animals receive Farnsworth?

Most animals will be herbivorous. The most numerous forms among these will either be small creatures, like Terran mice and rabbits, or they will be cursorial types like deer, antelopes, and zebras. These will all run away when approached, even if they have never been shot at. They are harmless unless our hero tries some lunatic stunt like grabbing an animal with his bare hands.

In some peculiar faunas, as among the Antarctic penguins and seals, the animals have no natural land enemies and so no instinct to avoid them. A man can walk among such creatures and kill them with a club. But this is not the way of a normal fauna.

Larger herbivores—the graviportals and the large armed cursorials—will probably ignore our explorer as long as he keeps his distance, say 100 yards. If he comes close enough to bother them, they may move off or they may attack. There is no way of telling in advance which they will do. It depends on the species, the circumstances, the individual

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animal, and how that animal happens to be feeling. Although the African elephant is usually willing to let well enough alone, one naturalist, without provocation, was stalked and pursued by one. When the elephant had been killed, it turned out to have a badly abscessed tusk. Suffering from a king-sized toothache, the beast had been looking for someone on whom to vent its rage.

As another example, I was given the following advice in Africa: If you run at a herd of buffalo, shouting and waving your arms, they will probably run away. But if you try that with one buffalo you may be killed. There is at least one coward in every herd. He starts to run, and that starts the others. But if you run at a single buffalo, he may not be a coward, and then you're dead.

Most herbivores won't bother you if you don't bother them; but you annoy the large ones at your peril. I heard of one man who, driving his automobile in Africa, passed an elephant eating by the roadside. The man seems to have had confused ideas about elephants, for he stopped his car, got out, and walked over to offer the elephant a bun. However, this was no circus elephant. The beast killed the man by throwing him twenty feet into the air and then utterly demolished his car, from which the other occupants had wisely fled.

As for the carnivores, the larger ones may try to make a meal from our explorer. A theropod dinosaur probably would, having no brain to speak of, but well-developed senses of sight and smell and a few simple reflexes that tell it to snap up anything that looks edible. On the other hand, large carnivorous mammals are likely to be more cautious about approaching strange creatures. If, however, the country has been hunted before by men with guns, the carnivores, like all the other animals, will probably run at the first sight or smell of man.

A wild animal is especially likely to be dangerous under three circumstances. One is when a carnivore either has never learned that man is not fair game or is getting too old and slow to catch its normal prey.

The second is when any large animal has been molested or wounded. Animals do not have human intelligence, but they do have human tempers. If irritated enough, they may lose these tempers and attack even when prudence would dictate a stealthy retreat.

The third case is when animals have been protected and become half-tame, and foolish people—like the man who tried to give a roll to a wild elephant—treat them with undue familiarity. At close quarters any wild animal, even when it has supposedly been

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tamed, is as dangerous as its size and armament permit. The graceful, liquid-eyed whitetail doe, the roly-poly kinkajou, the comical capuchin monkey, and the perky chipmunk all love their own way and have hair-trigger tempers. Thwart them, and you risk a maiming bite or kick. Scores of tourists are injured every year in Yellowstone Park because, in spite of all the warning signs, they insist on getting too close to the friendly-looking bears.

Most wild animals are harmless because they fear men. When for any reason they lose that fear they become dangerous. Let me tell you a true story to illustrate.

About a hundred years ago, my great-grandfather in upstate New York, Lyman R. Lyon, kept a herd of tame deer in a paddock in back of his house. One evening, while visiting the paddock, he turned his back on the buck. Because it was springtime, the buck had no antlers. But suddenly, for no reason, the buck butted my ancestor in the small of the back and knocked him flat.

As my great-grandfather rolled over, the buck sprang over the fallen man and tried to spear him with its hooves. My great-grandfather, with great presence of mind, seized the deer's ears in both hands and pulled down. Because my ancestor was a large, heavy man, the buck, standing spraddle-legged over him, could not get its deadly fore-hooves off the ground.

It was a stalemate. If Lyman Lyon let go, he would be killed before he could get up. His grip was weakening when he thought to release one ear in order to get out a pocket knife with his free hand. But then he could not open the knife with one hand, even using his teeth.

At last he pulled the buck's head down to his own and seized the buck's nose in his teeth. Then, having both hands free, he opened the knife and cut the buck's throat. Covered with the deer's blood, he staggered back to his house and into the kitchen, to the horror of his womenfolk. (You can read a fictionalized version of this incident in Walter Edmonds' excellent novel *The Big Barn*. From all I have been told, however, my forebear was much less of a hick than the "Ralph Wilding" of the story.)

Altogether it should not be hard, with a little thought, to plan a plausible fauna for an imaginary planet. Just remember that animals do not do things for which they are patently unfitted by evolution. Turtles do not, for instance, climb trees, nor do lions live on algae. Nothing subsists on nothing, and every species fits into a food chain in an ecological web. The eaten always outnumber the eaters many times

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over. Wild animals seldom attack people, save for what seems to the animal a good reason: to obtain a badly needed meal or to rid itself of a tormentor. And, if a given environment offers an unoccupied niche in which a species can make a living, some form will sooner or later come to take advantage of the opportunity. Like people.

COMING SOON

THE TREE OF TIME—a suspenseful and actionful 2 part novel by—**Damon Knight**

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THE EYES OF PHORKOS—an intriguing and thrilling fantasy about the most astounding discovery in the history of archaeology by—**L. E. Jones**

PACIFIST—a tense, provoking SF tale by—**Mack Reynolds**

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME—a delightful and all too little known story by—**Oscar Wilde**

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P. M. (for Philip Maitland) Hubbard is, of course, the author of THE GOLDEN BRICK, that fine and grisly story which appeared in our Jan. 1963 issue. There he brought the past and present together; here he conjectures vision of a time yet to come, when the relation between the sexes—and other pressing and cognate matters—is handled in a manner quite different from today's manner (though not without its own neatness of logic), while grey ash covers the far-reaching hills over which strange things run without tiring and to the sound of horns.

SPECIAL CONSENT

by P. M. Hubbard

THE YOUNG WOMAN STOPPED half-way up the hill, breathing a little roughly because of the extra burden she carried. She put a hand up to screen her eyes from the tremendous flare of the sunset. The first circle of standing stones was close above her now, tall outlines blurred by the overflow of the green and gold light that poured down from the sky. This circle was a restoration, only a century or two old. The inner circle was a mixture. The great stones at the top of the hill had always been there, since the time when the Mother had been what she now again was.

They did not stop her at the first circle nor yet at the second. She came from outside, but she was one of the ones they did not stop. Inside the second circle she paused again, pressing her hand against her side and once more out of breath. Then she went up the last slope, made the required gestures and went straight down into the darkness beneath the enormous stone lintel. She sat down on the worn stone and waited.

Presently the Mother said, "Your father is dead, Madi. Have you anyone else?"

"No one scheduled, Mother."

"Then what do you want?"

Madi told her. The Mother did not reply, and after a bit Madi told her again. Nothing more hap-

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pened. Once or twice the darkness stirred as though it was going to speak, but nothing came. She went up into the air.

The sunset had gone at last. The old women said that a hundred years before the sunsets had been much longer and more brilliant. They had been getting duller slowly ever since the Fire. Now the sky was apple-green and luminous, but the fierceness had gone.

As she came in, her husband threw a cloth over what he was doing. He giggled slightly with embarrassment. She made a scornful noise in her nose. "Making things *like* things," she said. "Back to the dark ages. Why don't you all stand on your heads? The effect would be much the same."

He blinked at her sulkily, twisting his hands behind his back. "I don't believe that." His voice was very deep. "We were talking about it today at the works. I don't believe it's necessarily wrong. They did it all those years." He stood up, powerful and lithe, tucking in his midriff instinctively so as to throw up the pectoral muscles and tensing his legs to round out the calves. She laughed at him.

"Men did it. And even men were coming to see that it was wrong in the end, even before the Fire. But never since. And we're not going back to that, just to amuse you. Father's dead."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Just at this late stage. What a disappointment for you. Can't they give you a name from the public list?"

She shook her head, smiling. He looked at her anxiously, but she turned and went out.

When she had chosen a daughter, she had gone to her father to get his consent. He had already been scheduled as available subject to consent and was glad enough to let his name go forward. None of the scheduled people found life very interesting, though they were comfortable enough, and although consents were mostly kept for close friends and relations, they were generally available. The Exchange Equalization Account Office, which managed these things, refused as a matter of policy to maintain a long public list, and needed very good reasons before making a name available. If a woman chose to have a child, she knew she would have to provide a private exchange. And that meant consent, men for a woman in Madi's class.

The man behind the counter greeted her warily. Even if he did not know her by sight, he knew what the clothes meant. You had to be careful. She said, "My father was scheduled and had given his consent, but he has died."

He clicked his tongue sympathetically, but he looked more apprehensive than ever. "Oh dear," he said, "I'm sorry, madam. We

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can't accept it, as you know. The rules are very strict and we daren't make exceptions."

"I know that," she said.

"Can you perhaps give us another name from the scheduled list? There'd have to be consent, of course, but I expect you could arrange something."

She shook her head a second time. "I want to talk to the Registrar," she said.

"Well, I don't know. I could ask whether the Registrar is available."

"Now," she said.

"The public list?" said the Registrar. She looked at the younger woman with absolute detachment, not unsympathetic but not involved. "I don't think there's a case. This daughter was not required, was she?"

"No, I chose her myself."

"By your husband?"

"Yes. I chose him, too, like a fool. He has two years to go."

"You are one of us. You talk to the Mother. Have you talked to her about this?"

"She knows, yes. I told her what I wanted. She did not say anything."

The Registrar turned up her hands palms outwards. "I can't make a name available, Madi, not under the ordinary dispensation. And you know what the law is, and you know why it is what it is. We must have a life for a life, even with natural wastage. These things happen, in fact, quite often. Once people on the schedule let their names go forward, there is a great tendency for them, even with the best will in the world, to go for natural wastage. It is something we find it very hard to combat. And in any case, it is not our job to combat it. We are here to make things more difficult, not easier. You'll have to get another consent from the scheduled list." The Registrar got up and looked at her blankly. "Unless you can get a Special Consent. That would be acceptable, but it's not easy. You know the conditions."

He was exercising himself in the courtyard, swinging the weights about and bending and stretching. He had oiled himself and the muscles worked like gilded ropes. He was so beautiful that her heart turned over at the sight of him. She said, "Stop preening yourself and come inside." He smirked a little and came after her, very lithe and well-balanced against her draped protuberance.

He said, "Have you been to the E.E.A. Office? Did they give you a name?"

"I went, yes. I saw the Registrar. She couldn't help. They can't make a name available from the public list for a chosen child like this."

"But when you chose her your father was available and had consented. You couldn't tell he was

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going to go off naturally beforehand."

"All the same, they won't accept it. They want another consent, or the child goes."

"Well, don't you know anyone on the scheduled list you can ask?"

"I don't. Do you?"

"No, of course I don't. How should I? But you know everybody. You are one of those. Won't somebody—?"

"Why should they?"

He was watching himself in the wall-glass, moving his arms slightly to see the muscles move on his shoulders. His mind was only half with her. He said, "It's the competition tomorrow at the works. Do you think I've a chance? Don't you think I've put on a bit these last six months?"

She said, "A Special Consent would do."

"What?" He was really listening now. "Who's going to give you a Special Consent?" She looked at him without speaking. He laughed a little uncertainly. "Not me, for one. There's two years to go, my lady, before I go on the list. You know that."

"It's your child."

"Mine? Only in the sense that you couldn't manage it entirely by yourself. Otherwise—." He looked at her sharply. "I'm not altogether a fool, you know, madam. I know why you chose me and how limited my use is. You can't have it both ways. Men will be what you make them. You can't suddenly saddle us with a responsibility you would be the first to deny us in other circumstances."

She turned on him in cold anger. "I won't have you talking like this. You've been talking to someone—the other men at the works, I suppose. There's too much talking at the works."

He sulked after that, and she could do nothing more with him. Instead she went out and set her face westwards to where, on top of the rounded curve of the hill, the green nipple of turf showed where the Mother lived.

All round the skyline the grey volcanic hills shut in the struggling green. Every year or two the vegetation, driven on by the ant-like industry of the people, climbed and closed over another hill. The time might come when there was nothing but green as far as the eye could see. Now to the mind's eye the grey went on beyond till the mind sickened at the thought of it. But it was only the men who thought of it at all.

One of the men said, "I've been thinking."

This was the thing they shared. The women took thought, and made decisions and drove the organization on into unrelenting survival. The men, in between times, were free to think.

"The Mother has come back," he said. "We know that. Once she was

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everything, then she was nothing, now she is everything again. I think I know why. I think at first there was all the world to expand in and too few people. The world was at their feet if they could keep going, but they were vulnerable. Expansion was everything. Hence the Mother. She was always the Killer as well, but at that stage creation was everything.

"The next stage came when the world had filled up a bit. Now it was other people that were the trouble. There was fighting to be done and a lot of things to be made, instead of simply found and endured. The Father took over from the Mother. That was what they call the Dark Ages now—all that time when the Father was on top. We were all right then. That was right up to the Fire, though they say that the Mother was coming back, even before. Since the Fire it's been the Mother again. It had to be, now it's expansion again. But it's not just expansion. It's multiplication by the rules, the Mother and the Killer working hand in glove. The E.E.A., do you see? It's the key to everything. The Mother's behind it, we all know that. But give us time and room enough, and the Father will be back. Meanwhile we can think. They can't stop that. They can't see over the hills, not as we can. What's more, they know it and resent it. The Father will be back. None of us will see it, of course, but we all know it will happen. Meanwhile they are what they are."

The sky was colouring towards sunset, but the men, tired with the physical labour they were equipped to perform, but could not organize, still sat there, staring out over the roofs to the dense green and the circle of grey hills beyond. They thought, extravagantly and inconclusively, but did not speak.

The horn blew as he came to the foot of the grey slope, and he wished he had not come so far. Something had been nagging at him, filling his mind but failing to make itself understood, and the urge to be on his own had been overwhelming. Now it was too late; he knew what it was. They had been working on him, up there on the central hill-top. Madi was one of those. She could arrange that. Otherwise he could never have come so far, not as late as this. The cultivators and the rehabilitation teams had long ago packed up and gone back towards the town. Nothing moved on the green as far back as he could see, and grey hills could hold anything. The sky had lost its fire; it was getting dark. The horn blew again, and he started to run.

He could run much faster than they could, but they would keep on forever. They were the Mother's hunters, whose minds were not their own. The essential thing was to run in the right direction, not

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to get lost where they could run him down. He knew what they would do if they caught him. He had known two men found like that. He only saw them once, short figures, bunched in twos and threes, moving momentarily on the skyline. They ran knock-kneed, even at a gallop. In front of them the tall, panic-stricken man ran effortlessly for his life.

If they had run by scent, like dogs, he could have held his line, but they split and headed him. He had been running several minutes when he found himself on grey ash again and the horn blew from almost in front. He broke back, picked up his direction in the last of the daylight and ran as he had never run before.

Near the first houses his breath went and there were horns on both sides of him. The runners were quite silent except for their breathing. The doorway showed dark in the dusk, and he ran straight into it. The door shut behind him. It was quite dark inside. He heard bare feet pattering round the house. They stopped, and something put a nose to the door and sniffed. There was a long sigh followed by a burst of laughter, high-pitched and throaty, and the feet took up their pattering again, round and round the house.

Someone moved the inside latch slightly, and he caught up his desperate breathing and listened. Then he began to sob, sitting there in the darkness with his head on his hands. He no longer cared about his remaining two years. It did not seem worth waiting for. "Send them away," he said. "I will do what you want, but don't let them come in."

She opened the door. There was a rush of feet, suddenly checked, and a long, shrill, multiple sigh. Madi spoke to them, using words he did not expect to understand. She was one of those. She had the authority, and the old language. Then she went out and shut the door after her. He heard horns twice after that, but very far away.

"Yes, madam," said the man behind the counter, "everything's quite in order. We have had your Special Consent through and the matter has already been dealt with. Do you wish to see the Registrar, madam?"

"No, no. So long as everything is in order. I have no time." She caught her breath and seemed to double in on herself. The clerk watched her with bright, appraising eyes, male and inscrutable. Then she recovered herself and set out, walking carefully but purposefully, for the great green dome at the centre of the world. Just short of the first circle she fell, but she was not one to be left lying, and they came out and carried her in. ◄

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Dr. Asimov's monthly column came in accompanied by the following, and we should like to share it with the Gentle Reader. *"The Memorial Day Weekend is coming up and I've got a few tasks that will be keeping me busy month's end. So I did my columnary stint early and am mailing it now to beat the holiday weekend to the punch. No doubt you will both be goofing off as soon as the calendar gives you the shadow of permission. Memorial Day! Whee-e-e-e! ¶ Believe me, fewer holidays and more old-fashioned industry and stick-to-itiveness will put this country back on its feet. What we need is the good old fourteen-hour day, seven-day week we practiced when my old man had a candy-store. This modern trend to the ten-hour day, six-day week is ruining us. ¶ Anyway, enclosed is TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR which contains a load of good stuff on the erratic motion of the Sun, and on yellow dwarfs, white dwarfs, red dwarfs and black dwarfs—information no child should be without in these race-conscious times."*

TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR

by Isaac Asimov

IT CAME AS A GREAT SHOCK TO ME, IN CHILDHOOD DAYS, TO LEARN that our Sun was something called a "yellow dwarf" and that sophisticated people scorned it as a rather insignificant member of the Milky Way.

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I had made the very natural assumption, prior to that, that stars were little things, and everything I had read confirmed the notion. There were innumerable fairy tales about the tiny stars which (I gathered) must be the little children of the Sun and Moon, the brightly shining Sun being the father and the dim, retiring Moon the mother.*

When I found that all those minute points of light were huge, glaring suns greater than our own, it not only upset the sanctity of the heavenly family for me, but it also offended me as a patriotic inhabitant of the Solar system. Consequently, it was with grim relief that I eventually learned that not all stars were greater than the Sun after all; that, in fact, a great many were smaller than the Sun.

What's more, I found some of those small stars to be intensely fascinating and in order to talk about them, I will begin Asimov-fashion at the other end of the stick, and consider the Earth and the Sun.

The Earth does not really revolve about the Sun. Both Earth and Sun (taken by themselves) revolve about a common center of gravity. Naturally, the center of gravity is closer to the more massive body and the degree of closeness is proportional to the ratio of masses of the two bodies.

Thus, the Sun is 333,400 times as massive as the Earth, and the center of gravity should therefore be 333,400 times as close to the Sun's center as to the Earth's center. The distance between Earth and Sun, center to center, is about 92,870,000 miles; and dividing that by 333,400 gives us the figure 280. Therefore, the center of gravity of the Earth-Sun system is 280 miles from the center of the Sun.

This means that as the Earth moves around this center of gravity in its annual revolution, the Sun makes a small circle 280 miles in radius about the same center, leaning always away from the Earth. Of course, this trifling wobble is quite imperceptible from an observation point outside the Solar system; say, from Alpha Centauri.

But what about the other planets? Each one of them revolves with the Sun about a common center of gravity. Some of the planets are both more massive than the Earth and more distant from the Sun, each of these factors working to move the center of gravity further from the Sun's center. To show you the result, I have worked out the following table (which, by the way, I have never seen in any astronomy text).

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* *I had curiously naive ideas about the comparative importance of the sexes in those days.*

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Planet	*Distance (miles) of center of gravity of Sun-planet system from center of Sun*
Mercury	6
Venus	80
Earth	280
Mars	45
Jupiter	460,000
Saturn	250,000
Uranus	80,000
Neptune	140,000
Pluto	1,500 (?)

The radius of the Sun is 432,200 miles, so the center of gravity in every case but one lies below the Sun's surface. The exception is Jupiter. The center of gravity of the Jupiter-Sun system is about 30,000 miles *above* the Sun's surface (always in the direction of Jupiter, of course).

If the Sun and Jupiter were all that existed in the Solar system, an observer from Alpha Centauri, say, though not able to see Jupiter, might (in principle) be able to observe that the Sun was making a tiny circle about something or other every twelve years. This "something or other" could only be the center of gravity of a system consisting of the Sun and another body. If our observer had a rough idea of the mass of the Sun, he could tell how distant the other body must be to impose a 12-year revolution. From that distance, as compared with the radius of the circle the Sun was making, he could deduce the mass of the other body. In this way, the observer on Alpha Centauri could discover the presence of Jupiter and work out its mass and its distance from the Sun without ever actually seeing it.

Actually, though, the wobble on the Sun imposed by Jupiter is still too small to detect from Alpha Centauri (assuming their instruments to be no better than ours). What makes it worse is that Saturn, Uranus and Neptune (the other planets can be ignored) impose wobbles on the Sun, too, which complicate its motion.

But suppose that circling the Sun were a body considerably more massive than Jupiter. The Sun would then make a much larger circle and a much simpler one for the effect of other revolving bodies would be swamped by this super-Jupiter. To be sure, this is not the case with the Sun, but is it possible that it might be so for other stars?

Yes, indeed, it *is* possible.

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In 1834, the German astronomer, Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel, concluded, from a long series of careful observations, that Sirius was moving across the sky in a wavy line. This could best be explained by supposing that the center of gravity of Sirius and another body was moving in a straight line and that it was Sirius's revolution about the center of gravity (in a period of some 50 years) that produced the waviness.

Sirius, however, is about 2½ times as massive as the Sun and for it to be pulled as far out of line as observation showed it to be, the companion body had to be much more massive than Jupiter. In fact, it turned out to be about 1,000 times as massive as Jupiter or just about as massive as our Sun. If we call Sirius itself "Sirius A" then this thousand-fold-Jupiter companion would be "Sirius B." (This use of letters has become a standard device for naming components of a multiple star system.)

Anything as massive as the Sun ought to be a star rather than a planet and yet, try as he might, Bessel could see nothing in the neighborhood of Sirius A where Sirius B ought to be. The seemingly natural conclusions was that Sirius B was a burnt-out star, a blackened cinder that had used up its fuel. For a generation, astronomers spoke of Sirius' "dark companion."

In 1862, however, an American telescope-maker, Alvan Graham Clark, was testing a new 18-inch lens he had made. He turned it on Sirius to test the sharpness of the image it would produce, and, to his chagrin, found there was a flaw in his lens, for near Sirius was a sparkle of light that shouldn't be there. Fortunately, before going back to his grinding, he tried the lens on other stars, and the defect disappeared! Back to Sirius—and there was that sparkle of light again.

It couldn't be a defect; Clark had to be seeing a star. In fact, he was seeing Sirius's "dark companion" which wasn't quite dark after all, for it was of the 8th magnitude. Allowing for its distance, however, it was at least dim, if not dark, for it was only 1/120 as luminous as our Sun —there was still that much of a dim glow amid its supposed ashes.

In the latter half of the 19th Century, spectroscopy came into its own. Particular spectral lines could be produced only at certain temperatures so that from the spectrum of a star its surface temperature could be deduced. In 1915, the American astronomer, Walter Sydney Adams, managed to get the spectrum of Sirius B and was amazed to discover that it was not a dimly glowing cinder at all, but had a surface rather hotter than that of the Sun!

But if Sirius B was hotter than the Sun, why was it only 1/120 as bright as the Sun? The only way out seemed to be to assume that it was

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much smaller than the Sun and had, therefore, a smaller radiating surface. In fact, to account for both its temperature and its low total luminosity, it had to have a diameter of about 30,000 miles. Sirius B, although a star, was just about the size of the planet, Uranus.

It was more dwarfish than any astronomer had conceived a star might be and it was white-hot, too. Consequently, Sirius B and all other stars of that type came to be called "white dwarfs."

But Bessel's observation of the mass of Sirius B was still valid. It was still just about as massive as the Sun. To squeeze all that mass into the volume of Uranus meant that the average density of Sirius B had to be 38,000 kilograms per cubic centimeter, or about 580 tons per cubic inch.

Twenty years earlier, this consequence of Adams' discovery would have seemed so ridiculous that the entire chain of reasoning would have been thrown out of court and the very concept of judging stellar temperatures by spectral lines would have come under serious doubt. By Adams's time, however, the internal structure of the atom had been worked out and it was known that virtually all the mass of the atoms was concentrated in a tiny nucleus at the very center of the atom. If the atom could be broken down and the central nuclei allowed to approach, the density of Sirius B and, in fact, densities millions of times greater still, became conceivable.

Sirius B by no means represents a record either for the smallness of a star or for its density. Van Maanen's Star (named for its discoverer) has a diameter of only 6,048 miles, so that it is smaller than the Earth and not very much larger than Mars. It is 1/7 as massive as our Sun (about 140 times as massive as Jupiter) and that is enough to make it fifteen times as dense as Sirius B. A cubic inch of average material from Van Maanen's star would weigh 8,700 tons.

And even Maanen's Star isn't the smallest. In the course of this last year, William J. Luyten of the University of Minnesota has discovered a white dwarf star with a diameter of about 1,000 miles—only half that of the Moon.

Of course, the white dwarfs can't really give us much satisfaction as "little stars." They may be dwarfs in volume but they are sun-size in mass, and giants in density and in intensity of gravitational fields. What about really little stars, in mass and temperature as well as in volume?

These are hard to find. When we look at the sky, we are automatically making a selection. We see all the large, bright stars for hun-

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dreds of light years in all directions, but the dim stars we can barely see at all, even when they are fairly close.

Judging by the stars we see, our Sun, sure enough, is a rather insignificant dwarf, but we can get a truer picture by confining ourselves to our immediate neighborhood. That is the only portion of space through which we can make a reasonably full census of stars, dim ones and all.

Thus, within five parsecs (16½ light years) of ourselves, according to a compilation prepared by Peter Van de Kamp of Swarthmore College, there are 39 stellar systems, including our own Sun. Of these, 8 include two visible components and 2 include three visible components, so that there are 51 individual stars altogether.

Of these, exactly three stars are considerably brighter than our Sun and these we can call "white giants."

Star	*Distance (light-years)*	*Luminosity (Sun = 1)*
Sirius A	8.6	23
Altair	15.7	8.3
Procyon A	11.0	6.4

There are then a dozen stars that are as bright or nearly as bright as the Sun. We can call these "yellow stars" without making any invidious judgements as to whether they are dwarfs or not.

Star	*Distance (light-years)*	*Luminosity (Sun = 1)*
Alpha Centauri A	4.3	1.01
Sun	...	1.00
70 Ophiuchi A	16.4	0.40
Tau Ceti	11.2	0.33
Alpha Centauri B	4.3	0.30
Omicron$_2$ Eridani A	15.9	0.30
Epsilon Eridani	10.7	0.28
Epsilon Indi	11.2	0.13
70 Ophiuchi B	16.4	0.08
61 Cygni A	11.1	0.07
61 Cygni B	11.1	0.04
Groombridge 1618	14.1	0.04

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Of the remaining stars, all of which are less than 1/25 as luminous as the Sun, four are white dwarfs:

Star	*Distance (light-years)*	*Luminosity (Sun = 1)*
Sirius B	8.6	0.008
Omicron$_2$ Eridani B	15.9	0.004
Procyon B	11.0	0.0004
Van Maanen's Star	13.2	0.00016

This leaves 32 stars that are not only considerably dimmer than the Sun, but considerably cooler, too, and therefore distinctly red in appearance. To be sure there are cool red stars that are nevertheless much brighter in total luminosity than our Sun because they are so gigantically voluminous. (This is the reverse of the white dwarf situation.) These tremendous cool stars are "red giants" and there are none of these in the Sun's vicinity—distant Betelgeuse and Antares are the best known examples.

The cool, red, small stars are "red dwarfs." An example of this is the very nearest star to ourselves, the third and dimmest member of the Alpha Centauri system. It should be called Alpha Centauri C, but because of its nearness, it is more frequently called Proxima Centauri. It is only 1/23,000 as bright as our Sun and, despite its nearness, can be seen only with a good telescope.

To summarize, then, there are, in our vicinity: 0 red giants, 3 white giants, 12 yellow stars, 4 white dwarfs and 32 red dwarfs. If we consider the immediate neighborhood of the Sun to be a typical one (and we have no reason to think otherwise) then well over half the stars in the heavens are red dwarfs and considerably dimmer than the Sun. Indeed our Sun is among the top ten percent of the stars in luminosity—"yellow dwarf" indeed!

The red dwarf stars offer us something new. When I discussed the displacement of the Sun by Jupiter at the beginning of the article, I pointed out that the displacement could be larger, and therefore possible to observe from other stars, if Jupiter were considerably larger.

An alternative would be to have the Sun considerably less massive. It is not the absolute mass of either component, but the ratio of the masses that counts. Thus, the Jupiter-Sun ratio is 1:1,000, which leads

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to an indetectable displacement. The mass ratio of the two components of the Sirius system, however is 1:2.5 and that is easily detectable.

If a star were, say, half the mass of the Sun and it were circled by a body eight times the mass of Jupiter, the mass ratio would be about 1:60. The displacement would not be as readily noticeable as in the case of Sirius, but it would be detectable.

Exactly such a displacement was detected in 1943 at Sproul Observatory in Swarthmore College, in connection with 61 Cygni. From unevennesses in the motion of one of the major components, a third component, 61 Cygni C was deduced as existing; a body with a mass 1/125 of our Sun or only 8 times that of Jupiter. In 1960, similar displacements were discovered for the star Lalande 21185 at Sproul Observatory. It, too, had a planet eight times the mass of Jupiter.

Now, in 1963, the same observatory announces a third planet outside the Solar system. The star involved is Barnard's Star.

This star was discovered in 1916 by the American astronomer, Edward Emerson Barnard and it turned out to be an unusual star indeed. In the first place, it is the second nearest star to ourselves, being only 6.1 light-years distant. (The three stars of the Alpha Centauri system, considered as a unit, are the nearest at 4.3 light years; Lalande 21185 at 7.9 light years is third nearest. Next is Wolf 359 and then the two stars of the Sirius system—at 8.0 and 8.6 light years respectively.)

Barnard's Star has the most rapid proper motion known, partly because it is so close. It moves 10.3 seconds of arc a year. This isn't much, really, for in the 47 years since its discovery, it has only moved a little over 8 minutes of arc (or about one-quarter the apparent width of the moon) across the sky. For a "fixed" star, however, that's a tremendously rapid movement; so rapid, in fact, that the star is sometimes called "Barnard's Runaway Star" or even "Barnard's Arrow."

Barnard's Star is a red dwarf with about one-fifth the mass of the Sun and less than 1/2500 the luminosity of the Sun (though it is nine times as luminous as Proxima Centauri).

The planet displacing Barnard's Star is Barnard's Star B and it is the smallest of the three invisible bodies yet discovered. It is about 1/700 the mass of the Sun and hence roughly 1.2 times the mass of Jupiter. Put another way it is about 500 times the mass of the Earth. If it possesses the overall density of Jupiter, it would make a planetary body about 100,000 miles in diameter.

All this has considerable significance. Astronomers have about decided from purely theoretical considerations that most stars have plan-

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ets. Now we find that in our immediate neighborhood, at least three stars have at least one planet apiece. Considering that we can only detect super-Jovian planets, this is a remarkable record. Our Sun has one planet of Jovian size and eight sub-Jovians. It is reasonable to suppose that any other star with a Jovian planet has a family of sub-Jovians also. And indeed, there ought to be a number of stars with sub-Jovian planets only.

In short, on the basis of these planetary discoveries, it would seem quite likely that nearly every star has planets.

A generation ago, when it was believed that solar systems arose through collisions or near-collisions of stars, it was felt that a planetary family was excessively rare. Now we might conclude that the reverse is ture; it is the truly lone star, the one without companion stars or planets, that is the really rare phenomenon.

And yet the red dwarfs aren't quite as little as they seem to be from their luminosity. Even the smallest red dwarf; Proxima Centauri, for instance; is not less than 1/10 the mass of the Sun. In fact, stellar masses are quite uniform; much more uniform than stellar volumes, densities or luminosities. Virtually all stars range in mass from not less than 1/10 of the Sun to not more than 10 times the Sun, a stretch of but two orders of magnitude.

There is good reason for this. As mass increases, the pressure and temperature at the center of the body also increases and the amount of radiation produced varies as the fourth power of the temperature. Increase the temperature 10 times, in other words, and luminosity increases 10,000 times.

Stars that are more than 10 times the mass of the Sun are therefore unstable, for the pressures associated with their vastly intense radiations blow them apart in short order. On the other hand stars with less than one-tenth the mass of the Sun do not have an internal temperature and pressure high enough to start a self-sustaining nuclear reaction.

The upper limit is an absolute one. Too-massive stars blow up and actually don't exist. Too-light stars merely don't shine and can't be seen, so that the lower limit is an arbitrary one. The little bodies may exist even if they can't be seen.

Below the smallest luminous stars are, indeed, the non-luminous planets. In our own Solar system, we have bodies up to the size of Jupiter which is perhaps 1/100 the mass of the feebly glowing Proxima Centauri. A body such as 61 Cygni C would have a mass 1/12 that of

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Proxima Centauri. Undoubtedly there must be bodies closing that remaining gap in mass.

Jupiter, large as it is for a planet, develops insufficient heat at its center to lend significant warmth to its surface. Whatever warmth exists on Jupiter's surface derives from Solar radiation. The same may be true for 61 Cygni C.

However, as we consider planets larger still, there must come a point where the internal heat, while not great enough to start nuclear reactions, is great enough to keep the surface warm, perhaps warm enough to allow water to remain eternally in the liquid form.

We might call this a super-planet but, after all, it is radiating energy in the infra-red. Such a body would not glow visibly hence "black dwarfs," but if our eyes were sensitive to infra-red we might see them as very dim stars. They might, therefore, be more fairly called "sub-stars" than super-planets.

Harlow Shapley, emeritus director of Harvard College Observatory, thinks it possible that such sub-stars are very common in space, and that they might even be the abode of life. To be sure, a sub-star with an Earth-like density would have a diameter of about 150,000 miles and a surface gravity about 18 times Earth-normal. To life developing in the oceans, however, gravity is of no importance.

Is it possible that such a sub-star (with, perhaps, a load of life) might come rolling close enough to the Solar system, some day, to attract exploring parties.

We can't be certain it won't happen. In the case of luminous stars, we can detect invaders from afar, and we can be certain that none will be coming this way for millions of years. A sub-star, however, could sneak up on us unobserved; we'd never know it was approaching. It might be right on top of us—say, within fifteen billion miles of the Sun—before we detected its presence through its reflected light and through its gravitational perturbations on the outer planets.

Then at last mankind might go out to see for themselves what a little star was like and set to rest that generations-long plaintive chant of childhood "How I wonder what you are!"

Only—it won't be twinkling.

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"Debonnaire" is our word for Alfred Bester the man: trimly-bearded, ornately-waistcoated, wit, gent., columnist for ROGUE *and* HOLIDAY. *"Absorbing" is our word for Alfred Bester the author: deep, rich, and all too few have his stories here been, from OF TIME AND THIRD AVENUE (Oct. 1951) to THE PI MAN (Oct. 1959). Now, in his first appearance in The Magazine since his retirement as its stimulating and controversial Books Editor, he manages to deal in a different way with a theme we honestly believed had been dealt to death. Welcome back, Mr. Bester, with your* reductio ad absurdem *account of an Adam who delved not and an Eve who did not spin; it's a pleasure.*

THEY DON'T MAKE LIFE LIKE THEY USED TO

by Alfred Bester

THE GIRL DRIVING THE JEEP WAS very fair and very Nordic. Her blonde hair was pulled back in a pony tail, but it was so long that it was more a mare's tail. She wore sandals, a pair of soiled bluejeans, and nothing else. She was nicely tanned. As she turned the jeep off Fifth Avenue and drove bouncing up the steps of the library, her bosom danced enchantingly.

She parked in front of the library entrance, stepped out, and was about to enter when her attention was attracted by something across the street. She peered, hesitated, then glanced down at her jeans and made a face. She pulled the pants off and hurled them at the pigeons eternally cooing and courting on the library steps. As they clattered up in fright, she ran down to Fifth Avenue, crossed, and stopped before a shop window. There was a plum colored wool dress on display. It had a high waist, a full skirt, and not too many moth holes. The price was $79.90.

The girl rummaged through old cars skewed on the avenue until she found a loose fender. She smashed the plate glass shop door,

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carefully stepped across the splinters, entered, and sorted through the dusty dress racks. She was a big girl and had trouble fitting herself. Finally she abandoned the plum colored wool and compromised on a dark tartan, size 12, $120 reduced to $99.90. She located a salesbook and pencil, blew the dust off, and carefully wrote: *I.O.U. $99.90. Linda Nielsen.*

She returned to the library and went through the main doors which had taken her a week to batter in with a sledge hammer. She ran across the great hall,, filthied with five years of droppings from the pigeons roosting there. As she ran, she clapped her arms over her head to shield her hair from stray shots. She climbed the stairs to the third floor and entered the Print Room. As always, she signed the register: *Date-June 20, 1981. Name-Linda Nielsen. Address-Central Park Model Boat Pond. Business or Firm-Last Man On Earth.*

She had had a long debate with herself about *Business or Firm* the first time she broke into the library. Strictly speaking, she was the last woman on earth, but she had felt that if she wrote that it would seem chauvinistic; and "Last Person On Earth" sounded silly, like calling a drink a beverage.

She pulled portfolios out of racks and leafed through them. She knew exactly what she wanted; something warm with blue accents to fit a twenty by thirty frame for her bedroom. In a priceless collection of Hiroshige prints she found a lovely landscape. She filled out a slip, placed it carefully on the librarian's desk, and left with the print.

Downstairs, she stopped off in the main circulation room, signed the register, went to the back shelves and selected two Italian grammars and an Italian dictionary. Then she backtracked through the main hall, went out to the jeep, and placed the books and print on the front seat alongside her companion, an exquisite Dresden China doll. She picked up a list that read:

Jap. print
Italian
20 x 30 pict. fr.
Lobster bisque
Brass polish
Detergent
Furn. polish
Wet mop

She crossed off the first two items, replaced the list on the dashboard, got into the jeep and bounced down the library steps. She drove up Fifth Avenue, threading her way through crumbling wreckage. As she was passing the ruins of St. Patrick's Cathedral at 50th Street, a man appeared from nowhere.

He stepped out of the rubble and, without looking left or right, started crossing the avenue just in

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front of her. She exclaimed, banged on the horn which remained mute, and braked so sharply that the jeep slewed and slammed into the remains of a No. 3 bus. The man let out a squawk, jumped ten feet, and then stood frozen, staring at her.

"You crazy jay-walker," she yelled. "Why don't you look where you're going? D'you think you own the whole city?"

He stared and stammered. He was a big man, with thick, grizzled hair, a red beard, and weathered skin. He was wearing army fatigues, heavy ski boots, and had a bursting knapsack and blanket roll on his back. He carried a battered shotgun, and his pockets were crammed with odds and ends. He looked like a prospector.

"My God," he whispered in a rusty voice. "Somebody at last. I knew it. I always knew I'd find someone." Then, as he noticed her long, fair hair, his face fell. "But a woman," he muttered. "Just my goddam lousy luck."

"What are you, some kind of nut?" she demanded. "Don't you know better than to cross against the lights?"

He looked around in bewilderment. "What lights?"

"So all right, there aren't any lights, but couldn't you look where you were going?"

"I'm sorry, lady. To tell the truth, I wasn't expecting any traffic."

"Just plain common sense," she grumbled, backing the jeep off the bus.

"Hey lady, wait a minute."

"Yes?"

"Listen, you know anything about TV? Electronics, how they say . . . ."

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"No, this is straight. Honest."

She snorted and tried to continue driving up Fifth Avenue, but he wouldn't get out of the way.

"Please, lady," he persisted. "I got a reason for asking. Do you know?"

"No."

"Damn! I never get a break. Lady, excuse me, no offense, but you got any guys in this town?"

"There's nobody but me. I'm the last man on earth."

"That's funny. I always thought I was."

"So all right, I'm the last woman on earth."

He shook his head. "There's got to be other people; there just has to. Stands to reason. South, maybe you think? I'm down from New Haven, and I figured if I headed where the climate was like warmer, there'd be some guys I could ask something."

"Ask what?"

"Aw, a woman wouldn't understand. No offense."

"Well, if you want to head south you're going the wrong way."

"That's south, ain't it?" he

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asked, pointing down Fifth Avenue.

"Yes, but you'll just come to a dead end. Manhattan's an island. What you have to do is go uptown and cross the George Washington bridge to Jersey."

"Uptown? Which way is that?"

"Go straight up Fifth to Cathedral Parkway, then over to the west side and up Riverside. You can't miss it."

He looked at her helplessly.

"Stranger in town?"

He nodded.

"Oh, all right," she said. "Hop in. I'll give you a lift."

She transferred the books and the china doll to the back seat, and he squeezed in alongside her. As she started the jeep she looked down at his worn ski boots.

"Hiking?"

"Yeah."

"Why don't you drive? You can get a car working, and there's plenty of gas and oil."

"I don't know how to drive," he said despondantly. "It's the story of my life."

He heaved a sigh, and that made his knapsack jolt massively against her shoulder. She examined him out of the corner of her eye. He had a powerful chest, a long, thick back, and strong legs. His hands were big and hard, and his neck was corded with muscles. She thought for a moment, then nodded to herself and stopped the jeep.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Won't it go?"

"What's your name?"

"Mayo. Jim Mayo."

"I'm Linda Nielsen."

"Yeah. Nice meeting you. Why don't it go?"

"Jim, I've got a proposition for you."

"Oh?" He looked at her doubtfully. "I'll be glad to listen, lady —I mean Linda, but I ought to tell you, I got something on my mind that's going to keep me pretty busy for a long t . . ." His voice trailed off as he turned away from her intense gaze.

"Jim, if you'll do something for me, I'll do something for you."

"Like what, for instance?"

"Well, I get terribly lonesome, nights. It isn't so bad during the day, there's always a lot of chores to keep you busy, but at night it's just awful."

"Yeah, I know," he muttered. "I've got to do something about it."

"But how do I come into this?" he asked nervously.

"Why don't you stay in New York for a while? If you do, I'll teach you how to drive, and find you a car so you don't have to hike south."

"Say, that's an idea. Is it hard, driving?"

"I could teach you in a couple of days."

"I don't learn things so quick."

"All right, a couple of weeks,

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but think of how much time you'll save in the long run."

"Gee," he said, "that sounds great." Then he turned away again. "But what do I have to do for you?"

Her face lit up with excitement. "Jim, I want you to help me move a piano."

"A piano? What piano?"

"A rosewood grand from Steinway's on 57th Street. I'm dying to have it in my place. The living room is just crying for it."

"Oh, you mean you're furnishing, huh?"

"Yes, but I want to play after dinner, too. You can't listen to records all the time. I've got it all planned; books on how to play, and books on how to tune a piano . . . I've been able to figure everything except how to move the piano in."

"Yeah, but . . . But there's apartments all over this town with pianos in them," he objected. "There must be hundreds, at least. Stands to reason. Why don't you live in one of them?"

"Never! I love my place. I've spent five years decorating it, and it's beautiful. Besides, there's the problem of water."

He nodded. "Water's always a headache. How do you handle it?"

"I'm living in the house in Central Park where they used to keep the model yachts. It faces the boat pond. It's a darling place, and I've got it all fixed up. We could get the piano in together, Jim. It wouldn't be hard."

"Well, I don't know, Lena . . ."

"Linda."

"Excuse me. Linda. I—"

"You look strong enough. What'd you do, before?"

"I used to be a pro rassler."

"There! I knew you were strong."

"Oh, I'm not a rassler any more. I become a bartender and went into the restaurant business. I opened 'The Body Slam' up in New Haven. Maybe you heard of it?"

"I'm sorry."

"It was sort of famous with the sports crowd. What'd you do before?"

"I was a researcher for BBDO."

"What's that?"

"An advertising agency," she explained impatiently. "We can talk about that later, if you'll stick around. And I'll teach you how to drive, and we can move in the piano, and there're a few other things that I—but that can wait. Afterwards you can drive south."

"Gee, Linda, I don't know . . ."

She took Mayo's hands. "Come on, Jim, be a sport. You can stay with me. I'm a wonderful cook, and I've got a lovely guest room . . ."

"What for? I mean, thinking you was the last man on earth."

"That's a silly question. A prop-

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er house has to have a guest room. You'll love my place. I turned the lawns into a farm and gardens, and you can swim in the pond, and we'll get you a new Jag . . . I know where there's a beauty up on blocks."

"I think I'd rather have a Caddy."

"You can have anything you like. So what do you say, Jim? Is it a deal?"

"All right, Linda," he muttered reluctantly. "You're a deal."

It was indeed a lovely house with its pagoda roof of copper weathered to verdigris green, fieldstone walls, and deep recessed windows. The oval pond before it glittered blue in the soft June sunlight, and Mallard ducks paddled and quacked busily. The sloping lawns that formed a bowl around the pond were terraced and cultivated. The house faced west, and Central Park stretched out beyond like an unkempt estate.

Mayo looked at the pond wistfully. "It ought to have boats."

"The house was full of them when I moved in," Linda said.

"I always wanted a model boat when I was a kid. Once I even—" Mayo broke off. A penetrating pounding sounded somewhere; an irregular sequence of heavy knocks that sounded like the dint of stones under water. It stopped as suddenly as it had begun. "What was that?" Mayo asked.

Linda shrugged. "I don't know for sure. I think it's the city falling apart. You'll see buildings coming down every now and then. You get used to it." Her enthusiasm rekindled. "Now come inside. I want to show you everything."

She was bursting with pride and overflowing with decorating details that bewildered Mayo, but he was impressed by her Victorian living room, *Empire* bedroom, and Country Kitchen with a working kerosene cooking stove. The Colonial guest room, with four-poster bed, hooked rug, and Tole lamps, worried him.

"This is kind of girlie-girlie, huh?"

"Naturally. I'm a girl."

"Yeah. Sure. I mean . . ." Mayo looked around doubtfully. "Well, a guy is used to stuff that ain't so delicate. No offense."

"Don't worry, that bed's strong enough. Now remember, Jim, no feet on the spread, and remove it at night. If your shoes are dirty, take them off before you come in. I got that rug from the museum and I don't want it messed up. Have you got a change of clothes?"

"Only what I got on."

"We'll have to get you new things tomorrow. What you're wearing is so filthy it's not worth laundering."

"Listen," he said desperately, "I think maybe I better camp out in the park."

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"Why on earth?"

"Well, I'm like more used to it than houses. But you don't have to worry, Linda. I'll be around in case you need me."

"Why should I need you?"

"All you have to do is holler."

"Nonsense," Linda said firmly. "You're my guest and you're staying here. Now get cleaned up; I'm going to start dinner. Oh damn! I forgot to pick up the lobster bisque."

She gave him a dinner cleverly contrived from canned goods, and served on exquisite Fornisetti china with Swedish silver flatware. It was a typical girl's meal, and Mayo was still hungry when it was finished, but too polite to mention it. He was too tired to fabricate an excuse to go out and forage for something substantial. He lurched off to bed, remembering to remove his shoes, but forgetting all about the spread.

He was awakened next morning by a loud honking and clatter of wings. He rolled out of bed and went to the windows just in time to see the Mallards dispossessed from the pond by what appeared to be a red balloon. When he got his eyes working properly, he saw that it was a bathing cap. He wandered out to the pond, stretching and groaning. Linda yelled cheerfully and swam toward him. She heaved herself up out of the pond onto the curbing. The bathing cap was all that she wore. Mayo backed away from the splash and spatter.

"Good morning," Linda said. "Sleep well?"

"Good morning," Mayo said. "I don't know. The bed put kinks in my back. Gee, that water must be cold. You're all gooseflesh."

"No, it's marvelous." She pulled off the cap and shook her hair down. "Where's that towel? Oh, here. Go on in, Jim. You'll feel wonderful."

"I don't like it when it's cold."

"Don't be a sissy."

A crack of thunder split the quiet morning. Mayo looked up at the clear sky in astonishment. "What the hell was that?" he exclaimed.

"Watch," Linda ordered.

"It sounded like a sonic boom."

"There!" she cried, pointing west. "See?"

One of the westside skyscrapers crumbled majestically, sinking into itself like a collapsible cup, and raining masses of cornice and brick. The flayed girders twisted and contorted. Moments later they could hear the roar of the collapse.

"Man, that's a sight," Mayo muttered in awe.

"The decline and fall of the Empire City. You get used to it. Now take a dip, Jim. I'll get you a towel."

She ran into the house. He dropped his shorts and took off his socks, but was still standing on

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the curb, unhappily dipping his toe into the water when she returned with a huge bath towel.

"It's awful cold, Linda," he complained.

"Didn't you take cold showers when you were a wrestler?"

"Not me. Boiling hot."

"Jim, if you just stand there, you'll never go in. Look at you, you're starting to shiver. Is that a tattoo around your waist?"

"What? Oh, yeah. It's a python, in five colors. It goes all the way around. See?" He revolved proudly. "Got it when I was with the Marines in Saigon back in '64. It's a Oriental-type python. Elegant, huh?"

"Did it hurt?"

"To tell the truth, no. Some guys try to make out like it's Chinese torture to get tattooed, but they're just showin' off. It more itches than anything else."

"You were a marine in '64?"

"That's right."

"How old were you?"

"Twenty."

"You're thirty-seven now?"

"Thirty-six going on thirty-seven."

"Then you're prematurely grey?"

"I guess so."

She contemplated him thoughtfully. "I tell you what, if you do go in, don't get your head wet."

She ran back into the house. Mayo, ashamed of his vacilation, forced himself to jump feet first into the pond. He was standing, chest deep, splashing his face and shoulders with water when Linda returned. She carried a stool, a pair of scissors, and a comb.

"Doesn't it feel wonderful?" she called.

"No."

She laughed. "Well, come out. I'm going to give you a haircut."

He climbed out of the pond, dried himself, and obediently sat on the stool while she cut his hair. "The beard, too," Linda insisted. "I want to see what you really look like." She trimmed him close enough for shaving, inspected him, and nodded with satisfaction. "Very handsome."

"Aw, go on," he blushed.

"There's a bucket of hot water on the stove. Go and shave. Don't bother to dress. We're going to get you new clothes after breakfast, and then . . . The Piano."

"I couldn't walk around the streets naked," he said, shocked.

"Don't be silly. Who's to see? Now hurry."

They drove down to Abercrombie & Fitch on Madison and 45th Street, Mayo wrapped modestly in his towel. Linda told him she'd been a customer for years, and showed him the pile of sales slips she had accumulated. Mayo examined them curiously while she took his measurements and went off in search of clothes. He was almost indignant when she returned with her arms ladened.

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"Jim, I've got some lovely elk moccasins, and a Safari suit, and wool socks, and Shipboard shirts, and—"

"Listen," he interrupted, "do you know what your whole tab comes to? Nearly fourteen hundred dollars."

"Really? Put on the shorts first. They're drip-dry."

"You must have been out of your mind, Linda. What'd you want all that junk for?"

"Are the socks big enough? What junk? I needed everything."

"Yeah? Like . . . " He shuffled the signed sales slips. "Like One Underwater Viewer With Plexiglass Lens, $9.95? What for?"

"So I could see to clean the bottom of the pond."

"What about this Stainless Steel Service For Four, $39.50?"

"For when I'm lazy and don't feel like heating water. You can wash stainless steel in cold water." She admired him. "Oh, Jim, come look in the mirror. You're real romantic, like the big game hunter in that Hemingway story."

He shook his head. "I don't see how you're ever going to get out of hock. You got to watch your spending, Linda. Maybe we better forget about that piano, huh?"

"Never," Linda said adamantly. "I don't care how much it costs. A piano is a lifetime investment, and it's worth it."

She was frantic with excitement as they drove uptown to the Steinway showroom, and helpful and underfoot by turns. After a long afternoon of muscle-cracking and critical engineering involving makeshift gantries and an agonizing dollie-haul up Fifth Avenue, they had the piano in place in Linda's living room. Mayo gave it one last shake to make sure it was firmly on its legs, and then sank down, exhausted. "Je-zuz!" he groaned. "Hiking south would've been easier."

"Jim!" Linda ran to him and threw herself on him with a fervent hug. "Jim, you're an angel. Are you all right?"

"I'm okay." He grunted. "Get off me, Linda. I can't breathe."

"I just can't thank you enough. I've been dreaming about this for ages. I don't know what I can do to repay you. Anything you want, just name it."

"Aw," he said, "you already cut my hair."

"I'm serious."

"Ain't you teaching me how to drive?"

"Of course. As quickly as possible. That's the least I can do." Linda backed to a chair and sat down, her eyes fixed on the piano.

"Don't make such a fuss over nothing," he said, climbing to his feet. He sat down before the keyboard, shot an embarrassed grin at her over his shoulder, then reached out and began stumbling through *The Minuet in G.*

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Linda gasped and sat bolt upright. "You play," she whispered.

"Naw. I took piano when I was a kid."

"But you remember."

"A little bit."

"Can you read music?"

"I used to."

"Could you teach me?"

"I guess so; it's kind of hard. Hey, here's another piece I had to take." He began mutilating *The Rustle Of Spring*. What with the piano out of tune and his mistakes, it was ghastly.

"Beautiful," Linda breathed. "Just beautiful!" She stared at his back while an expression of decision and determination stole across her face. She arose, slowly crossed to Mayo, and put her hands on his shoulders.

He glanced up. "Something?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered. "You practice the piano. I'll get dinner."

But she was so concentrated and preoccupied for the rest of the evening that she made Mayo nervous. He stole off to bed early.

It wasn't until three o'clock the following afternoon that they finally got a car working, and it wasn't a Caddy, it was a Chevvy; a hard top because Mayo didn't like the idea of being exposed to the weather in a convertible. They drove out of the 10th Avenue garage and back to the east side where Linda felt more at home. She confessed that the boundaries of her world were from Fifth Avenue to Third, and from 42nd Street to 86th. She was uncomfortable outside this pale.

She turned the wheel over to Mayo and let him creep up and down Fifth and Madison, practicing starts and stops. He sideswiped five wrecks, stalled eleven times, and reversed through a store front which, fortunately, was devoid of glass. He was trembling with nervousness.

"It's real hard," he complained.

"It's just a question of practice," she reasured him. "Don't worry. I promise you'll be an expert if it takes us a month."

"A whole month!"

"You said you were a slow learner, didn't you? Don't blame me. Stop here a minute."

He jolted the Chevvy to a halt. Linda got out.

"Wait for me."

"What's up?"

"A surprise."

She ran into a shop and was gone for half an hour. When she reappeared she was wearing a pencil-thin black sheath, pearls, and high heeled opera pumps. She had twisted her hair into a coronet. Mayo regarded her with amazement as she got into the car.

"What's all this?" he asked.

"Part of the surprise. Turn east on 52nd Street."

He labored, started the car, and drove east. "Why'd you get all

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dressed up in an evening gown?"

"It's a cocktail dress."

"What for?"

"So I'll be dressed for where we're going. Watch out, Jim!" Linda wrenched the wheel and sheered off the stern of a shattered sanitation truck. "I'm taking you to a famous restaurant."

"To eat?"

"No, silly, for drinks. You're my visiting fireman, and I have to entertain you. That's it on the left. See if you can park somewhere."

He parked abominably. As they got out of the car, Mayo stopped and began to sniff curiously.

"Smell that?" he asked.

"Smell what?"

"That sort of sweet smell."

"It's my perfume."

"No, it's something in the air, kind of sweet and chokey. I know that smell from somewhere, but I can't remember."

"Never mind. Come inside." She led him into the restaurant. "You ought to be wearing a tie," she whispered, "but maybe we can get away with it."

Mayo was not impressed by the restaurant decor, but was fascinated by the portraits of celebrities hung in the bar. He spent rapt minutes burning his fingers with matches, gazing at Mel Allen, Red Barber, Casey Stengel, Frank Gifford and Rocky Marciano. When Linda finally came back from the kitchen with a lighted candle, he turned to her eagerly.

"You ever see any of them TV stars in here?" he asked.

"I suppose so. How about a drink?"

"Sure. Sure. But I want to talk more about them TV stars."

He escorted her to a bar stool, blew the dust off, and helped her up most gallantly. Then he vaulted over the bar, whipped out his handkerchief, and polished the mahogany professionally. "This is my specialty," he grinned. He assumed the impersonally friendly attitude of the bartender. "Evening, M'am. Nice night. What's your pleasure?"

"God, I had a rough day in the shop! Dry Martini on the rocks. Better make it a double."

"Certainly, M'am. Twist or olive?"

"Onion."

"Double dry Gibson on the rocks. Right." Mayo searched behind the bar and finally produced whisky, gin, and several bottles of soda, as yet only partially evaporated through their sealed caps. "Afraid we're fresh out of Martinis, M'am. What's your second pleasure?"

"Oh, I like that. Scotch, please."

"This soda'll be flat," he warned, "and there's no ice."

"Never mind."

He rinsed a glass with soda and poured her a drink.

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"Thank you. Have one on me, bartender. What's your name?"

"They call me Jim, M'am. No thanks. Never drink on duty."

"Then come off duty and join me."

"Never drink off duty, M'am."

"You can call me Linda."

"Thank you, Miss Linda."

"Are you serious about never drinking, Jim?"

"Yeah."

"Well, Happy Days."

"And Long Nights."

"I like that, too. Is it your own?"

"Gee, I don't know. It's sort of the usual bartender's routine, a specially with guys. You know? Suggestive. No offense."

"None taken."

"Bees!" Mayo burst out.

Linda was startled. "Bees what?"

"That smell. Like inside bee hives."

"Oh? I wouldn't know," she said indifferently. "I'll have another, please."

"Coming right up. Now listen, about them TV celebrities, you actually saw them here? In person?"

"Why of course. Happy Days, Jim."

"May they all be Saturdays."

Linda pondered. "Why Saturdays?"

"Day off."

"Oh."

"Which TV stars did you see?"

"You name 'em, I saw 'em." She laughed. "You remind me of the kid next door. I always had to tell him the celebrities I'd seen. One day I told him I saw Jean Arthur in here, and he said, 'With his horse?' "

Mayo couldn't see the point, but was wounded nevertheless. Just as Linda was about to soothe his feelings, the bar began a gentle quivering, and at the same time a faint subterranean rumbling commenced. It came from a distance, seemed to approach slowly, and then faded away. The vibration stopped. Mayo stared at Linda.

"Je-zus! You think maybe this building's going to go?"

She shook her head. "No. When they go, it's always with that boom. You know what that sounded like? The Lexington Avenue subway."

"The subway?"

"Uh-huh. The local train."

"That's crazy. How could the subway be running?"

"I didn't say it *was*. I said it *sounded* like. I'll have another please."

"We need more soda." Mayo explored and reappeared with bottles and a large menu. He was pale. "You better take it easy, Linda," he said. "You know what they're charging per drink? $1.75. Look."

"To hell with expense. Let's live a little. Make it a double, bartender. You know something,

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Jim? If you stayed in town I could show you where all your heroes lived. Thank you. Happy Days. I could take you up to BBDO and show you their tapes and films. How about that? Stars like . . . like Red . . . Who?"

"Barber."

"Red Barber, and Rocky Gifford, and Rocky Casey, and Rocky, the Flying Squirrel."

"You're putting me on," Mayo said, offended again.

"Me, sir? Putting you on?" Linda said with dignity. "Why would I do a thing like that? Just trying to be pleasant. Just trying to give you a good time. My mother told me, Linda, she told me, just remember this about a man, wear what he wants and say what he likes, is what she told me. You want this dress?" she demanded.

"I like it, if that's what you mean."

"Know what I paid for it? Ninety-nine fifty."

"What? A hundred dollars for a skinny black thing like that?"

"It is not a skinny black thing like that. It is a basic black cocktail frock. And I paid twenty dollars for the pearls. Simulated," she explained. "And sixty for the opera pumps. And forty for the perfume. Two hundred and twenty dollars to give you a good time. You having a good time?"

"Sure."

"Want to smell me?"

"I already."

"Bartender, give me another."

"Afraid I can't serve you, M'am."

"Why not?"

"You've had enough already."

"I have not had enough already," Linda said indignantly. "Where's your manners?" She grabbed the whisky bottle. "Come on, let's have a few drinks and talk up a storm about TV stars. Happy Days. I could take you up to BBDO and show you their tapes and films. How about that?"

"You already asked me."

"You didn't answer. I could show you movies, too. You like movies? I hate 'em, but I can't knock 'em any more. Movies saved my life when the big bang came."

"How was that?"

"This is a secret, understand? Just between you and me. If any other agency ever found out . . ." Linda looked around and then lowered her voice. "BBDO located this big cache of silent films. Lost films, see? Nobody knew the prints were around. Make a great TV series. So they sent me to this abandoned mine in Jersey to take inventory."

"In a mine?"

"That's right. Happy Days."

"Why were they in a mine?"

"Old prints. Acetate. Catch fire. Also rot. Have to be stored like wine. That's why. So took two of my assistants with me to spend weekend down there, checking."

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"You stayed in the mine a whole weekend?"

"Uh-huh. Three girls. Friday to Monday. That was the plan. Thought it would be a fun deal. Happy Days. So. Where was I? Oh. So, took lights, blankets, linen, plenty of picnic, the full schmeer, and went to work. I remember exact moment when blast came. Was looking for third reel of an UFA film, *Gekronter Blumenorden an der Pegnitz*. Had reel one, two, four, five, six. No three. Bang! Happy Days."

"Jesus. Then what?"

"My girls panicked. Couldn't keep 'em down there. Never saw them again. But I knew. I knew. Stretched that picnic forever. Then starved even longer. Finally came up, and for what? For who? Whom?" She began to weep. "For nobody. Nobody left. Nothing." She took Mayo's hands. "Why won't you stay?"

"Stay? Where?"

"Here."

"I am staying."

"I mean for a long time. Why not? Haven't I got lovely home? And there's all New York for supplies. And farm for flowers and vegetables. We could keep cows and chickens. Go fishing. Drive cars. Go to museums. Art galleries. Entertain . . ."

"You're doing all that right now. You don't need me."

"But I do. I do."

"For what?"

"For piano lessons."

After a long pause he said, "You're drunk."

"Not wounded, sire, but dead."

She lay her head on the bar, beamed up at him roguishly, and then closed her eyes. An instant later, Mayo knew she had passed out. He compressed his lips. Then he climbed out of the bar, computed the tab, and left fifteen dollars under the whisky bottle.

He took Linda's shoulder and shook her gently. She collapsed into his arms, and her hair came tumbling down. He blew out the candle, picked Linda up, and carried her to the Chevvy. Then, with anguished concentration, he drove through the dark to the boat pond. It took him forty minutes.

He carried Linda into her bedroom and sat her down on the bed which was decorated with an elaborate arrangement of dolls. Immediately she rolled over and curled up with a doll in her arms, crooning to it. Mayo lit a lamp and tried to prop her upright. She went over again, giggling.

"Linda," he said, "you got to get that dress off."

"Mf."

"You can't sleep in it. It cost a hundred dollars."

"Nine'nine-fif'y."

"Now come on, honey."

"Fm."

He rolled his eyes in exasperation, and then undressed her,

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carefully hanging up the basic black cocktail frock, and standing the sixty dollar pumps in a corner. He could not manage the clasp of the pearls (simulated) so he put her to bed still wearing them. Lying on the pale blue sheets, nude except for the necklace, she looked like a Nordic odalisque.

"Did you muss my dolls?" she mumbled.

"No. They're all around you."

"Thas right. Never sleep without them." She reached out and petted them lovingly. "Happy Days. Long Nights."

"Women!" Mayo snorted. He extinguished the lamp and tramped out, slamming the door behind him.

Next morning Mayo was again awakened by the clatter of dispossessed ducks. The red balloon was sailing on the surface of the pond, bright in the warm June sunshine. Mayo wished it was a model boat instead of the kind of girl who got drunk in bars. He stalked out and jumped into the water as far from Linda as possible. He was sluicing his chest when something seized his ankle and nipped him. He let out a yell, and was confronted by Linda's beaming face bursting out of the water before him.

"Good morning," she laughed.

"Very funny," he muttered.

"You look mad this morning."

He grunted.

"And I don't blame you. I did an awful thing last night. I didn't give you any dinner, and I want to apologise."

"I wasn't thinking about dinner," he said with baleful dignity.

"No? Then what on earth are you mad about?"

"I can't stand women who get drunk."

"Who was drunk?"

"You."

"I was not," she said indignantly.

"No? Who had to be undressed and put to bed like a kid?"

"Who was too dumb to take off my pearls?" she countered. "They broke and I slept on pebbles all night. I'm covered with black and blue marks. Look. Here and here and—"

"Linda," he interrupted sternly, "I'm just a plain guy from New Haven. I got no use for spoiled girls who run up charge accounts and all the time decorate themselves and hang around society-type saloons getting loaded."

"If you don't like my company why do you stay?"

"I'm going," he said. He climbed out and began drying himself. "I'm starting south this morning."

"Enjoy your hike."

"I'm driving."

"What? A kiddie-kar?"

"The Chevvy."

"Jim, you're not serious?" She

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climbed out of the pond, looking alarmed. "You really don't know how to drive yet."

"No? Didn't I drive you home falling down drunk last night?"

"You'll get into awful trouble."

"Nothing I can't get out of. Anyway, I can't hang around here forever. You're a party girl; you just want to play. I got serious things on my mind. I got to go south and find guys who know about TV."

"Jim, you've got me wrong. I'm not like that at all. Why, look at the way I fixed up my house. Could I have done that if I'd been going to parties all the time?"

"You done a nice job," he admitted.

"Please don't leave today. You're not ready yet."

"Aw, you just want me to hang around and teach you music."

"Who said that?"

"You did. Last night."

She frowned, pulled off her cap, then picked up her towel and began drying herself. At last she said, "Jim, I'll be honest with you. Sure, I want you to stay a while. I won't deny it. But I wouldn't want you around permanently. After all, what have we got in common?"

"You're so damn uptown," he growled.

"No, no, it's nothing like that. It's simply that you're a guy and I'm a girl, and we've got nothing to offer each other. We're different. We've got different tastes and interests. Fact?"

"Absolutely."

"But you're not ready to leave yet. So I tell you what; we'll spend the whole morning practicing driving, and then we'll have some fun. What would you like to do? Go window-shopping? Buy more clothes? Visit the Modern Museum? Have a picnic?"

His face brightened. "Gee, you know something? I was never to a picnic in my whole life. Once I was bartender at a clambake, but that's not the same thing; not like when you're a kid."

She was delighted. "Then we'll have a real kid-type picnic."

And she brought her dolls. She carried them in her arms while Mayo toted the picnic basket to the Alice In Wonderland monument. The statue perplexed Mayo, who had never heard of Lewis Carroll. While Linda seated her pets and unpacked the picnic, she gave Mayo a summary of the story, and described how the bronze heads of Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare had been polished bright by the swarms of kids playing King of the Mountain.

"Funny, I never heard of that story," he said.

"I don't think you had much of a childhood, Jim."

"Why would you say a—" He stopped, cocked his head, and listened intently.

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"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"You hear that Blue Jay?"

"No."

"Listen. He's making a funny sound; like steel."

"Steel?"

"Yeah. Like . . . Like swords in a duel."

"You're kidding."

"No. Honest."

"But birds sing; they don't make noises."

"Not always. Blue Jays imitate noises a lot. Starlings, too. And parrots. Now why would he be imitating a sword fight? Where'd he hear it?"

"You're a real country boy, aren't you, Jim? Bees and Blue Jays and Starlings and all that . . ."

"I guess so. I was going to ask; why would you say a thing like that, me not having any childhood?"

"Oh, things like not knowing Alice, and never going on a picnic, and always wanting a model yacht." Linda opened a dark bottle. "Like to try some wine?"

"You better go easy," he warned.

"Now stop it, Jim. I'm not a drunk."

"Did you or didn't you get smashed last night?"

She capitulated. "All right, I did; but only because it was my first drink in years."

He was pleased by her surrender. "Sure. Sure. That figures."

"So? Join me?"

"What the hell, why not?" He grinned. "Let's live a little. Say, this is one swingin' picnic, and I like the plates, too. Where'd you get them?"

"Abercrombie & Fitch," Linda said, deadpan. "Stainless Steel Service For Four, $39.50. Skoal."

Mayo burst out laughing. "I sure goofed, didn't I, kicking up all that fuss? Here's looking at you."

"Here's looking right back."

They drank and continued eating in warm silence, smiling companionably at each other. Linda removed her Madras silk shirt in order to tan in the blazing afternoon sun, and Mayo politely hung it up on a branch. Suddenly Linda asked, "Why didn't you have a childhood, Jim?"

"Gee, I don't know." He thought it over. "I guess because my mother died when I was a kid. And something else, too; I had to work a lot."

"Why?"

"My father was a schoolteacher. You know how they get paid."

"Oh, so that's why you're anti-egghead."

"I am?"

"Of course. No offense."

"Maybe I am," he conceded. "It sure was a letdown for my old man, me playing fullback in high school, and him wanting like an Einstein in the house."

"Was football fun?"

"Not like playing games. Foot-

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ball's a business. Hey, remember when we were kids how we used to chose up sides? *Ibbety, bibbety, zibbety, zab?"*

"We used to say, *Eenie, meenie, miney, mo."*

"Remember: *April Fool, go to school, tell your teacher you're a fool?"*

"I love coffee, I love tea, I love the boys, and the boys love me."

"I bet they did at that," Mayo said solemnly.

"Not me."

"Why not?"

"I was always too big."

He was astonished. "But you're not big," he assured her. "You're just the right size. Perfect. And really built. I noticed when we moved the piano in. You got muscle, for a girl. A specially in the legs, and that's where it counts."

She blushed. "Stop it, Jim."

"No. Honest."

"More wine?"

"Thanks. You have some, too."

"All right."

A crack of thunder split the sky with its sonic boom, and was followed by the roar of collapsing masonry.

"There goes another skyscraper," Linda said. "What were we talking about?"

"Games," Mayo said promptly. "Excuse me for talking with my mouth full."

"Oh yes. Jim did you play *Drop The Handkerchief* up in New Haven?" Linda sang. *"A tisket, a tasket, a green and yellow basket. I sent a letter to my love, and on the way I dropped it . . ."*

"Gee," he said, much impressed. "You sing real good."

"Oh, go on"!

"Yes you do. You got a swell voice. Now don't argue with me. Keep quiet a minute. I got to figure something out." He thought intently for a long time, finishing his wine and absently accepting another glass. Finally he delivered himself of a decision. "You got to learn music."

"You know I'm dying to, Jim."

"So I'm going to stay a while and teach you; as much as I know. Now hold it! Hold it!" he added hastily, cutting off her excitement. "I'm not going to stay in your house. I want a place of my own."

"Of course, Jim. Anything you say."

"And I'm still headed south."

"I'll teach you to drive, Jim. I'll keep my word."

"And no strings, Linda."

"Of course not. What kind of strings?"

"You know. Like the last minute you all of a sudden got a Looey Cans couch you want me to move in."

"Louis Quinze!" Linda's jaw dropped. "Wherever did you learn that?"

"Not in the Marines, that's for sure."

They laughed, clinked glasses,

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and finished their wine. Suddenly Mayo leaped up, pulled Linda's hair, and ran to the Wonderland monument. In an instant he had climbed to the top of Alice's head.

"I'm King of the Mountain," he shouted, looking around in imperial survey. "I'm King of the—" He cut himself off and stared down behind the statue.

"Jim, what's the matter?"

Without a word, Mayo climbed down and strode to a pile of debris half hidden inside overgrown Forsythia bushes. He knelt and began turning over the wreckage with gentle hands, Linda ran to him.

"Jim, what's wrong?"

"These used to be model boats," he muttered.

"That's right. My God, is that all? I thought you were sick, or something."

"How come they're here?"

"Why, I dumped them, of course."

"You?"

"Yes. I told you. I had to clear out the boat house when I moved in. That was ages ago."

"You did this?"

"Yes. I—"

"You're a murderer," he growled. He stood up and glared at her. "You're a killer. You're like all women, you got no heart and soul. To do a thing like this!"

He turned and stalked toward the boat pond. Linda followed him, completely bewildered.

"Jim, I don't understand. Why are you so mad?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"But I had to have houseroom. You wouldn't expect me to live with a lot of model boats."

"Just forget everything I said. I'm going to pack and go south, I wouldn't stay with you if you was the last person on earth."

Linda gathered herself and suddenly darted ahead of Mayo. When he tramped into the boathouse, she was standing before the door of the guest room. She held up a heavy iron key.

"I found it," she panted. "Your door's locked."

"Gimmie that key, Linda."

"No."

He stepped toward her, but she faced him defiantly and stood her ground.

"Go ahead," she challenged. "Hit me."

He stopped. "Aw, I wouldn't pick on anybody that wasn't my own size."

They continued to face each other, at a complete impasse.

"I don't need my gear," Mayo muttered at last. "I can get more stuff somewheres."

"Oh, go ahead and pack," Linda answered. She tossed him the key and stood aside. Then Mayo discovered there was no lock in the bedroom door. He opened the door, looked inside, closed it, and looked at Linda. She kept her face

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straight but began to sputter. He grinned. Then they both burst out laughing.

"Gee," Mayo said, "you sure made a monkey out of me. I'd hate to play poker against you."

"You're a pretty good bluffer yourself, Jim. I was scared to death you were going to knock me down."

"You ought to know I wouldn't hurt nobody."

"I guess I do. Now, let's sit down and talk this over sensibly."

"Aw, forget it, Linda. I kind of lost my head over them boats, and I—"

"I don't mean the boats; I mean going south. Every time you get mad you start south again. Why?"

"I told you, to find guys who know about TV."

"Why?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"I can try. Why don't you explain what you're after; specifically? Maybe I can help you."

"You can't do nothing for me; you're a girl."

"We have our uses. At least I can listen. You can trust me, Jim. Aren't we chums? Tell me about it."

Well, when the blast come (Mayo said) I was up in the Berkshires with Gil Watkins. Gil was my buddy, a real nice guy and a real bright guy. He took two years from M.I.T. before he quit college. He was like chief engineer or something at WNHA, the TV station in New Haven. Gil had a million hobbies. One of them was spee—speel—I can't remember. It meant exploring caves.

So anyway we were up in this flume in the Berkshires, spending the weekend inside, exploring and trying to map everything and figure out where the underground river come from. We brought food and stuff along, and bed rolls. The compass we were using went crazy for like twenty minutes, and that should have give us a clue, but Gil talked about magnetic ores and stuff. Only when we come out Sunday night, I tell you it was pretty scarey. Gil knew right off what happened.

"By Christ, Jim," he said, "they up and done it like everybody always knew they would. They've blew and gassed and poisoned and radiated themselves straight to hell, and we're going back to that goddam cave until it all blows over."

So me and Gil went back and rationed the food and stayed as long as we could. Finally we come out again and drove back to New Haven. It was dead like all the rest. Gil put together some radio stuff and tried to pick up broadcasts. Nothing. Then we packed some canned goods and drove all around; Bridgeport, Waterbury, Hartford, Springfield, Providence, New London . . . a big circle. Nobody. Nothing. So we come

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back to New Haven and settled down, and it was a pretty good life.

Daytime, we'd get in supplies and stuff, and tinker with the house to keep it working right. Nights, after supper, Gil would go off to WNHA around seven o'clock and start the station. He was running it on the emergency generators. I'd go down to "The Body Slam," open it up, sweep it out, and then start the bar TV set. Gil fixed me a generator for it to run on.

It was a lot of fun watching the shows Gil was broadcasting. He'd start with the news and weather, which he always got wrong. All he had was some Farmer's Almanacs and a sort of antique barometer that looked like that clock you got there on the wall. I don't think it worked so good, or maybe Gil never took weather at M.I.T. Then he'd broadcast the evening show.

I had my shotgun in the bar in case of holdups. Anytime I saw something that bugged me, I just up with the gun and let loose at the set. Then I'd take it and throw it out the front door, and put another one in its place. I must have had hundreds waiting in the back. I spent two days a week just collecting reserves.

Midnight, Gil would turn off WNHA, I'd lock up the restaurant, and we'd meet home for coffee. Gil would ask how many sets I shot, and laugh when I told him. He said I was the most accurate TV poll ever invented. I'd ask him about what shows were coming up next week, and argue with him about . . . oh . . . about like what movies or football games WNHA was scheduling. I didn't like Westerns much, and I hated them high-minded panel discussions.

But the luck had to turn lousy; it's the story of my life. After a couple of years I found out I was down to my last set, and then I was in trouble. This night Gil run one of them icky commercials where this smart-alex woman saves a marriage with the right laundry soap. Naturally I reached for my gun, and only the last minute remembered not to shoot. Then he run an awful movie about a misunderstood composer, and the same thing happened. When we met back at the house, I was all shook up.

"What's the matter?" Gil asked.

I told him.

"I thought you liked watching the shows," he said.

"Only when I could shoot 'em."

"You poor bastard," he laughed, "you're a captive audience now."

"Gil, could you maybe change the programs, seeing the spot I'm in?"

"Be reasonable, Jim. WNHA has to broadcast variety. We operate on the cafeteria basis; something for everybody. If you don't

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like a show, why don't you switch channels?"

"Now that's silly. You know damn well we only got one channel in New Haven."

"Then turn your set off."

"I can't turn the bar set off, it's part of the entertainment. I'd lose my whole clientele. Gil, do you *have* to show them awful movies, like that army musical last night, singing and dancing and kissing on top of Sherman tanks, for Jezus sake!"

"The women love uniform pictures."

"And those commercials; women always sneering at somebody's girdle, and fairys smoking cigarettes, and—"

"Aw," Gil said, "write a letter to the station."

So I did, and a week later I got an answer. It said: *Dear Mr. Mayo, we are very glad to learn that you are a regular viewer of WNHA, and thank you for your interest in our programing. We hope you will continue to enjoy our broadcasts. Sincerely yours, Gilbert O. Watkins, Station Manager.* There was a couple of tickets for an interview show enclosed. I showed the letter to Gil, and he just shrugged.

"You see what you're up against, Jim," he said. "They don't care about what you like or don't like. All they want to know is are you watching."

I tell you, the next couple of months were hell for me. I couldn't keep the set turned off, and I couldn't watch it without reaching for my gun a dozen times a night. It took all my will power to keep from pulling the trigger. I got so nervous and jumpy that I knew I had to do something about it before I went off my rocker. So one night I brought the gun home and shot Gil.

Next day I felt a lot better, and when I went down to "The Body Slam" at seven o'clock to clean up, I was whistling kind of cheerful. I swept out the restaurant, polished the bar, and then turned on the TV to get the news and weather. You wouldn't believe it, but the set was busted. I couldn't get a picture. I couldn't even get a sound. My last set, busted.

So you see, that's why I have to head south (Mayo explained) I got to locate a TV repairman.

There was a long pause after Mayo finished his story. Linda examined him keenly, trying to conceal the gleam in her eye. At last she asked with studied carelessness, "Where did he get the barometer?"

"Who? What?"

"Your friend, Gil. His antique barometer. Where did he get it?"

"Gee, I don't know. Antiquing was another one of his hobbies."

"And it looked like that clock?"

"Just like it."

"French?"

"I couldn't say."

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"Bronze?"

"I guess so. Like your clock. Is that bronze?"

"Yes. Shaped like a sunburst?"

"No, just like yours."

"That's a sunburst. The same size?"

"Exactly."

"Where was it?"

"Didn't I tell you? In our house."

"Where's the house?"

"On Grant Street."

"What number?"

"Three fifteen. Say, what is all this?"

"Nothing, Jim. Just curious. No offense. Now I think I'd better get our picnic things."

"You wouldn't mind if I took a walk by myself?"

She cocked an eye at him. "Don't try driving alone. Garage mechanics are scarcer than TV repairmen."

He grinned and disappeared; but after dinner the true purpose of his disappearance was revealed when he produced a sheaf of sheet music, placed it on the piano rack, and led Linda to the piano bench. She was delighted and touched.

"Jim, you angel! Wherever did you find it?"

"In the apartment house across the street. Fourth floor, rear. Name of Horowitz. They got a lot of records, too. Boy, I can tell you it was pretty spooky snooping around in the dark with only matches. You know something funny, the whole top of the house is full of glop."

"Glop?"

"Yeah. Sort of white jelly, only it's hard. Like clear concrete. Now look, see this note? It's C. Middle C. It stands for this white key here. We better sit together. Move over . . ."

The lesson continued for two hours of painful concentration, and left them both so exhausted that they tottered to their rooms with only perfunctory goodnights.

"Jim," Linda called.

"Yeah?" he yawned.

"Would you like one of my dolls for your bed?"

"Gee, no. Thanks a lot, Linda, but guys really ain't interested in dolls."

"I suppose not. Never mind. Tomorrow I'll have something for you that really interests guys."

Mayo was awakened next morning by a rap on his door. He heaved up in bed and tried to open his eyes.

"Yeah? Who is it?" he called.

"It's me. Linda. May I come in?"

He glanced around hastily. The room was neat. The hooked rug was clean. The precious candlewick bedspread was neatly folded on top of the dresser.

"Okay. Come on in."

Linda entered, wearing a crisp seersucker dress. She sat down on

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the edge of the four-poster and gave Mayo a friendly pat. "Good morning," she said. "Now Listen. I'll have to leave you alone for a few hours, I've got things to do. There's breakfast on the table, but I'll be back in time for lunch. All right?"

"Sure."

"You won't be lonesome?"

"Where you going?"

"Tell you when I get back." She reached out and touseled his head. "Be a good boy and don't get into mischief. Oh, one other thing. Don't go into my bedroom."

"Why should I?"

"Just don't anyway."

She smiled and was gone. Moments later, Mayo heard the jeep start and drive off. He got up at once, went into Linda's bedroom, and looked around. The room was neat, as ever. The bed was made, and her pet dolls were lovingly arranged on the coverlet. Then he saw it.

"Gee," he breathed.

It was a model of a full-rigged clipper ship. The spars and rigging were intact, but the hull was peeling, and the sails were shredded. It stood before Linda's closet, and alongside it was her sewing basket. She had already cut out a fresh set of white linen sails. Mayo knelt down before the model and touched it tenderly.

"I'll paint her black with a gold line around her," he murmured, "and I'll name her the *Linda N.*"

He was so deeply moved that he hardly touched his breakfast. He bathed, dressed, took his shotgun and a handful of shells, and went out to wander through the park. He circled south, passed the playing fields, the decaying carousel, and the crumbling skating rink, and at last left the park and loafed down Seventh Avenue.

He turned east on 50th Street and spent a long time trying to decipher the tattered posters advertising the last performance at Radio City Music Hall. Then he turned south again. He was jolted to a halt by the sudden clash of steel. It sounded like giant sword blades in a titanic duel. A small herd of stunted horses burst out of a side street, terrified by the clangor. Their shoeless hooves thudded bluntly on the pavement. The sound of steel stopped.

"That's where that Blue Jay got it from," Mayo muttered. "But what the hell is it?"

He drifted eastward to investigate, but forgot the mystery when he came to the diamond center. He was dazzled by the blue-white stones glittering in the showcases. The door of one jewel mart had sagged open, and Mayo tiptoed in. When he emerged it was with a strand of genuine matched pearls which had cost him an I.O.U. worth a year's rent on "The Body Slam."

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His tour took him to Madison Avenue where he found himself before Abercrombie & Fitch. He went in to explore and came at last to the gun racks. There he lost all sense of time, and when he recovered his senses he was walking up Fifth Avenue toward the boat pond. An Italian Cosmi automatic rifle was cradled in his arms, guilt was in his heart, and a saleslip in the store read: *I.O.U. 1 Cosmi Rifle, $750.00. 6 Boxes Ammo. $18.00. James Mayo.*

It was past three o'clock when he got back to the boathouse. He eased in, trying to appear casual, hoping the extra gun he was carrying would go unnoticed. Linda was sitting on the piano bench with her back to him.

"Hi," Mayo said nervously. "Sorry I'm late. I . . . I brought you a present. They're real." He pulled the pearls from his pocket and held them out. Then he saw she was crying.

"Hey, what's the matter?"

She didn't answer.

"You wasn't scared I'd run out on you? I mean, well, all my gear is here. The car, too. You only had to look."

She turned. "I hate you!" she cried.

He dropped the pearls and recoiled, startled by her vehemence. "What's the matter?"

"You're a lousy, rotten liar!"

"Who? Me?"

"I drove up to New Haven this morning." Her voice trembled with passion. "There's no house standing on Grant Street. It's all wiped out. There's no Station WNHA. The whole building's gone."

"No."

"Yes. And I went to your restaurant. There's no pile of TV sets out in the street. There's only one set, over the bar. It's rusted to pieces. The rest of the restaurant is a pig stye. You were living there all the time. Alone. There was only one bed in back."

"Lies! All lies!"

"Why would I lie about a thing like that?"

"You never shot any Gil Watkins."

"I sure did. Both barrels. He had it coming."

"And you haven't got any TV set to repair."

"Yes I do."

"And even if it is repaired, there's no station to broadcast."

"Talk sense," he said angrily. "Why would I shoot Gil if there wasn't any broadcast,"

"If he's dead, how can he broadcast?"

"See? And you just now said I didn't shoot him."

"Oh, you're mad! You're insane!" she sobbed. "You just described that barometer because you happened to be looking at my clock. And I believed your crazy lies. I had my heart set on a barometer to match my clock. I've

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been looking for years." She ran to the wall arrangement and hammered her fist alongside the clock. "It belongs right here. Here. But you lied, you lunatic. There never was a barometer."

"If there's a lunatic around here, it's you," he shouted. "You're so crazy to get this house decorated that nothing's real for you any more."

She ran across the room, snatched up his old shotgun and pointed it at him. "You get out of here. Right this minute. Get out or I'll kill you. I never want to see you again."

The shotgun kicked off in her hands, knocking her backwards, and spraying shot over Mayo's head into a corner bracket. China shattered and clattered down. Linda's face went white.

"Jim! My God, are you all right? I didn't mean to . . . It just went off . . ."

He stepped forward, too furious to speak. Then, as he raised his hand to cuff her, the sound of distant reports came, BLAM-BLAM-BLAM. Mayo froze.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered.

Linda nodded.

"That wasn't any accident. It was a signal."

Mayo grabbed the shotgun, ran outside, and fired the second barrel into the air. There was a pause. Then again came the distant explosions in a stately triplet, BLAM-BLAM-BLAM. They had an odd sucking sound, as though they were implosions rather than explosions. Far up the park, a canopy of frightened birds mounted into the sky.

"There's somebody," Mayo exulted. "By God, I told you I'd find somebody. Come on."

They ran north, Mayo digging into his pockets for more shells to reload and signal again.

"I got to thank you for taking that shot at me, Linda."

"I didn't shoot at you," she protested. "It was an accident."

"The luckiest accident in the world. They could be passing through and never know about us. But what the hell kind of guns are they using? I never heard no shots like that before, and I heard 'em all. Wait a minute."

On the little piazza before the Wonderland monument, Mayo halted and raised the shotgun to fire. Then he slowly lowered it. He took a deep breath. In a harsh voice he said, "Turn around. We're going back to the house." He pulled her around and faced her south.

Linda stared at him. In an instant he had become transformed from a gentle teddy bear into a panther.

"Jim, what's wrong?"

"I'm scared," he growled. "I'm goddam scared, and I don't want you to be, too." The triple salvo sounded again. "Don't pay any at-

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tention," he ordered. "We're going back to the house. Come on!"

She refused to move. "But why? Why?"

"We don't want any part of them. Take my word for it."

"How do you know? You've got to tell me."

"Christ! You won't let it alone until you find out, huh? All right. You want the explanation for that bee smell, and them buildings falling down, and all the rest?" He turned Linda around with a hand on her neck, and directed her gaze at the Wonderland monument. "Go ahead. Look."

A consumate craftsman had removed the heads of Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare, and replaced them with towering Mantis heads, all sabre mandibles, antenna, and faceted eyes. They were of a burnished steel, and gleamed with unspeakable ferocity. Linda let out a sick whimper and sagged against Mayo. The triple report signaled once more.

Mayo caught Linda, heaved her over his shoulder, and loped back toward the pond. She recovered consciousness in a moment and began to moan. "Shut up," he growled. "Whining won't help." He set her on her feet before the boathouse. She was shaking but trying to control herself. "Did this place have shutters when you moved in? Where are they?"

"Stacked." She had to squeeze the words out. "Behind the trellis."

"I'll put 'em up. You fill buckets with water and stash 'em in the kitchen. Go!"

"Is it going to be a siege?"

"We'll talk later. Go!"

She filled buckets, and then helped Mayo jam the last of the shutters into the window embrasures. "All right, inside," he ordered. They went into the house and shut and barred the door. Faint shafts of the late afternoon sun filtered through the louvers of the shutters. Mayo began unpacking the cartridges for the Cosmi rifle. "You got any kind of gun?"

"A .22 revolver somewhere."

"Ammo?"

"I think so."

"Get it ready."

"Is it going to be a siege?" she repeated.

"I don't know. I don't know who they are, or what they are, or where they come from. All I know is, we got to be prepared for the worst."

The distant implosions sounded. Mayo looked up alertly, listening. Linda could make him out in the dimness now. His face looked carved. His chest gleamed with sweat. He exuded the musky odor of caged lions. Linda had an overpowering impulse to touch him. Mayo loaded the rifle, stood it alongside the shotgun, and began padding from shutter to shutter, peering out vigilantly, wait-

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ing with massive patience.

"Will they find us?" Linda asked.

"Maybe."

"Could they be friendly?"

"Maybe."

"Those heads looked so horrible."

"Yeah."

"Jim, I'm scared. I've never been so scared in my life."

"I don't blame you."

"How long before we know?"

"An hour, if they're friendly; two or three, if they're not."

"W-Why longer?"

"If they're looking for trouble, they'll be more cautious."

"Jim, what do you really think?"

"About what?"

"Our chances."

"You really want to know?"

"Please."

"We're dead."

She began to sob. He shook her savagely. "Stop that. Go get your gun ready."

She lurched across the living room, noticed the pearls Mayo had dropped, and picked them up. She was so dazed that she put them on automatically. Then she went into her darkened bedroom and pulled Mayo's model yacht away from the closet door. She located the .22 in a hatbox on the closet floor, and removed it along with a small carton of cartridges.

She realized that a dress was unsuited to this emergency. She got a turtleneck sweater, jodhpurs, and boots from the closet. Then she stripped naked to change. Just as she raised her arms to unclasp the pearls, Mayo entered, paced to the shuttered south window, and peered out. When he turned back from the window, he saw her.

He stopped short. She couldn't move. Their eyes locked, and she began to tremble, trying to conceal herself with her arms. He stepped forward, stumbled on the model yacht, and kicked it out of the way. The next instant he had taken possession of her body, and the pearls went flying, too. As she pulled him down on the bed, fiercely tearing the shirt from his back, her pet dolls also went into the discard heap along with the yacht, the pearls, and the rest of the world.

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GUEST EDITORIAL:

Toward A Definition of Science Fiction

Science fiction is the frontier of the mind and the imagination of the human race. Science fiction is horse opera set in space, written to please unwashed adolescents who wear propellers on their beanies. It is the shape of things to come. It is the expression of mankind's yearning to break out of his tiny corner of a galaxy and his determination to find his inheritance out among the stars. It's trashy pulp magazines with garish covers showing almost naked women being chased by bug-eyed monsters. It's imaginative prophesy based on logical extrapolation. It's Jules Verne writing his ridiculous nonsense, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,* about an imaginary invention less practical then than a spaceship is now. It's a science fiction writer being investigated by the F.B.I. a year before Hiroshima because a story he'd just published indicated that he *must* (but didn't) have inside information on something darkly secret. It's the wildest form of escape reading. It's mankind with his face toward the stars, freed at last of superstition and recognizing his own godhood, readying himself to take over the universe and wind it up again when entropy starts to run it down. Science fiction is all of these things, but they can be boiled down; they can be stated more simply. It is a nightmare and a dream. And isn't that what we're living in and living for today? A nightmare and a dream?

—FREDRIC BROWN

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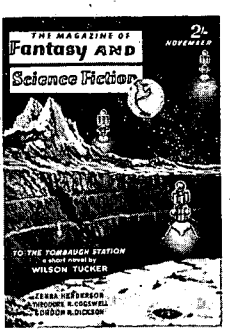

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